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Chapter 1

Reverie vs. Reality

(Solitary confinement - Millhaven, 1985)
Aching in my bones, I'm sore, stiff, and freezing cold. The hard steel from my chains contracts against my flesh. My frigid body is soaked through from the icy water fired at me from the powerful fire hose. I was thrown half way across my cell when the spray slammed into my naked flesh. The burning sting of Mace has subsided but my sight remains blurry. The glacial cement floor numbs my shivering body. I can't straighten up at all.

I shut my eyes and try to forget my freezing body but a disjointed volley of images shoot through my mind. Myself . . . drunk and raging in a room in a local bar . . . landing the unlucky combination that killed . . . he's gagging . . . drowning in his own vomit . . . the cops . . . dragging me away . . .

Who gives a damn how this all started? How it will end is what counts . . .

My recurring fantasy of revenge in the hole at Millhaven – (all reveries are italicized)
Majestic old growth giants tower proudly into the gilded horizon and converge on snow-tipped mountain peaks puncturing wisps of swirling clouds. I'm mesmerized by the lull of the watery azure, as the ocean breeze rustles overgrown leaves swaying on wide umbrella branches. Drawing huge gulps of the sweet aroma of pine, I feel the crisp morning chill caressing my crimson cheeks.

In the distance, a rushing brook weaves a blue ribbon across the mountainous region, spilling its purifying essence. Ears trained on the gentle cascade, I hear spring birds announce the arrival of a new season with their dulcet orchestra playing in the winds. Nature is so majestic--breathtaking! How I missed her rejuvenating dimensions and yearned for her healing properties. How earnestly I craved to hug my big old tree when I was locked up like a wild beast in Millhaven.

Oh yes, I was brutalized, tortured, and made to suffer.

I'll never forget your torture dungeons--those putrid, inhumane testing laboratories. It was horrific. A vivid and brutal nightmare. Well, as for you sniveling, groveling vermin-filled maggots, welcome to my nightmare you sons-of-a-bitches. It's payback time.

Wait until Frank the Bank, Mike the Spike, and Pistol Pete read your missing persons' reports and see your filthy faces pasted in every tabloid across the country. The boys inside your infamous mechanical beasts will relish the fact that revenge is being exacted--even if the boys from the 'hood don't know I'm the long awaited vigilante man.

Let me say that I've accomplished this worthy achievement primarily for my selfish satisfaction. Rest assured, my motive includes all of you, so that you all may come to know pain and suffering as I've come to know them. Let us take this delightful opportunity to bridge our field of experience. Identification is very crucial, isn't it? Yes, you'll come to identify and empathize, you pricks.

Can you feel the suffocating solitude descending like a coal cloud of soot? Can you feel the fiery heat of hatred burning your face like Mace? Can you feel yourselves slipping into the dark abyss of insanity and sliding into the chasm of psychosis? Taste the blood of revenge whetting your own filthy palates? You will . . . oh yes . . . you will.

What a historic coup. Six brutal penitentiary screws, two pig-faced tyrannical wardens, four abusive and slanderous coppers, one dictatorial power-driven parole officer, one heavy-handed closed-minded judge, one lying, cunning, and deceiving crown attorney, and two filthy rat-bastard-enemies. How sweet revenge really is. I never thought I could catch so many of you bumbling and rambling idiots, but here you are buried deep underground in my makeshift prison.

QUIET. QUIET . . . filthy rodents . . . QUIET.

This pit was dug with my own sweat and took a tremendous amount of effort to carve into the cold hard ground. Tell me, how do you feel being so deep in this remote wooded area, my dear little prisoners? You know you're doomed and without hope don't you? Look at the gigantic, towering pine trees. Right, you can't see from down there.

I'm delighted with my calculations and precise measurements. The fortified bus fits perfectly in the ground. It had been long and arduous work to strip the bus of all its contents. The steel-barred ceiling and cast-iron floor and walls have been masterfully laid. No amenities for you whimpering, low-life cowards. You can view this ingenious creativity as my version of your Chinese cell. As you see, you're not the only ones who can stratify torture pits and insane asylums.

Keep sniveling and groveling. I don't give a shit. In fact, your unceasing lamenting and frightful cries is music to my ears.

How long I have waited for this moment of triumph. Seven long years . . . yes . . . seven long years of careful planning and only six months of hard, dedicated work--and here it is. Incredible. I bet you're incredulous yourselves. Well, you better start believing. How long did you think you could keep on antagonizing and oppressing me before fate turned on you? Do you think I'm some kind of mindless laboratory rat devoid of reason? Nobody messes with me. Suit or no suit. Law or no law.

We're all human and we all bleed . . .

The biting cramp in my leg penetrates my reverie. Trying to ease the pain, I inch myself into a new position. The bastards left me in a puddle of water. It's been hours since I last ate and hours more to go. I try to ignore the physical torment . . . the fantasy comes to my rescue . .

It's good that you're starving, I tell my prisoners, as I look down on them in their metal-encased pit. Ha. They're cold as blocks of ice and deathly terrified. You all seem so meek and humble, I say. Where's your famous pompous attitude of superiority today? I know your true colors. Your sunken yellow faces reflect how spineless you all are. What sheer delight seeing your sockets bulging in utter terror. He who laughs last, laughs the longest and loudest.

You--captured in a dimly lit parking lot late at night as you shopped at your favorite mall. I was so swift--so silent.

And you, idiot--seized right out from the false security of your own home. You'll never forget that scene. Your wife will never forget it either, will she? My shoulder padding gave me the appearance of a giant weighing three hundred pounds. The Kleenex in my mouth and the red tape pasted to the bridge of my nose threw her for a real tizzy. She was horrified. I never thought anyone could pass out from fear.

And you--whisked from under your warm blankets. You'll never sleep alone again will you asshole? Maybe in your grave . . . SHUT UP. The idiot, choking back racking sobs--he's slipping into trauma . . . shock . . . screw 'em.

You're all mine. Yes, all mine to do with as I please. And pleasssssse . . . I've great ideas for our nice little get together. Wow . . . the pleasure and satisfaction are consuming me. This is exhilarating and gratifying . . . I did it, I really did it.

Well judge, you'll just have to defer your famous, eloquent decision on the murder trial. What are the reasons for your incarceration and sentence, dick-head? SHUT UP . . . Keep that trap sealed or I'll sew your lips shut . . . I will--don't dare push me . . .

You don't look so sophisticated and smart without your black robe. In fact, you look fat and out of shape. I wonder, do you want to hold a mock trial concerning your fate today? Quit your lamenting. I'm judge, jury, and executioner.

The jerk has no gall and no jam . . . Get up out of the corner . . . His thick pot bellied carcass reminds me of a pig at the zoo--pink blob of flesh . . . Quit your damn begging and act like a man. Squeak up. Are you a man or a mouse? You look like a rat. I say put some timber in that voice, boy. Slap the copper . . . Slap him now--or I toss gasoline into the bus . . . NOW, I said.

The verdict is evident in my mind. You're all guilty and will be made to accept your own narrow belief that man must suffer for his injustices. I wonder where your vast repertoire of legalese is today. To hell with it . . . I jab the idiot with my needle affixed to the end of a twelve-foot pole. The pompous ass screams in shock and recoils in pain. Ha. I wonder if you still believe in the adversarial system? You may play the Devil's advocate but I'm his servant . . .

Oh my, son of a bitch, I hear your children pleading for your safe return on the radio, must let you hear their breaking voices. Whimpering little low lives. Just like mom and dad. Poor me, poor me--poor me another drink. This is so much fun. Don't your kids realize what face you sport in your public service attire? You're all hypocrites of gargantuan proportions.

Hmmm . . . what punishment would best suit your crimes against humanity? Has to be something really bad, really dreadful . . .

I'm distracted by the squealing of my pets. Their thin slatted metal cage rattling loudly, they seem extremely rabid and vicious at this hour. Stooping over, I peer into their cramped cage and shudder at the dreadful look in their glossy red eyes. Their razor sharp teeth are yellow and caked with red, moist frothing saliva. Holy shit. They're starting to eat one another. Blood and guts all over the damn place.

All right, I'm going to toss you and your friends with my captives very soon. Take it easy buddy. Incredibly, the fat slinky rats seem to understand me. What ominous looking creatures. They have to weigh over twenty pounds each. Shivers shoot through my spine. Truly, sewer rats have to be the ugliest creatures. They have not eaten in five days, they're famished. As they slink along, their thick gray matted fur ripples over racks of undulant ribs . . .

Faint voices echo in the corridor as sounds of jangling keys lightly tease my ears. My mind struggles to focus as the vivid images of my murderous fantasy linger. A set of heavy footsteps approaches my cell door and stops abruptly.

Throbbing . . . My head is pounding and focusing is difficult. Shaking my head, I try to clear the cobwebs from my mind.

A pair of dark eyes peer through the slot of my cell door and I feel shame for a moment in my nakedness. I laugh madly and want to lash out viciously. The dark eyes suddenly fill with terror. The bright light in my cell veils my sight. Everything is so damned unreal. Emptiness and void envelop me .

Chapter 2
Wicked Wastelands

Crawl. Drag yourself, Ritchy. Have to get to the door but these restraining chains and belts leave me paralyzed, immobile.

I've been bound and chained like a rabid beast for over seventy-two hours already. Lying on this cold wet-soaked floor, I'm seized with rheumatic aches from head to toe. My murderous rage is soothing, my only numbing respite. I need to return to fantasy land, so they better leave me alone. I'll get even very soon. Let 'em dish it out because it'll come back a hundredfold.

My naked and curled torso is tightening, contracting in the cold air that flows through the cracks around the solid steel door. The chilling vapor envelops and wracks every sinew of my cramped body. The callous robots have left the door open leading to the yard. I'm freezing because of these callous coppers.

I want to remain unfeeling and entertained in my fantasy. The coppers will be cold and shivering some day soon. Law restrains them but I've adopted my own law. The power is mine, not theirs.

Mysterious eyes remain fixed on me, so I better not utter a word. I know the barbarians want to send me to their famous insane asylum in Penetanguishene. The idiots want to send me to that hate factory and keep me doped up all year long. Forget that trip. They're the psychotic nuts, not I.

I drag myself now, and my urine on the ice-cold floor sticks to my shivering body as the stench fills my nostrils. The rankness is revolting. I know the men in the hole are becoming sick with it, sick with the nauseating smell of putrid bowels--and death.

I'll remain in this shit-hole until I'm released onto the street. I'll pay them visits after I steal my bus, reinforce it, and dig my hole deep in the woods. Yes, the plan is all but complete already.

The dark eyes look away . . . I hear muffled voices. What the hell are they talking about? Mumbling voices echo and reverberate into a vast and empty cosmos. Is the shrink advising the screws to loosen the restraints and grant me clothing, food, mattress, and maybe a shower? "Don't be so humanitarian, Doc. You're a collaborator and I know your true colors. You're very close to being put on my hit list. Shut your fat trap and leave while there's still time. Think of your loved ones".

Drag yourself, Ritchy. Have to make it to the door and prepare to keep warm and play music throughout this hellish inferno. The damn floor . . .it's freezing cold . . . my aching spine is tight . . . rigid. Rheumatism is going to set in for good. God sakes.

Have to bang my frozen feet on the hard steel door and send the sounds of fury throughout solitary confinement. My bare feet are numb as millions of needle pricks move across my toes. I must ignore the pain in my bluish feet and move to get warm. Lying on my back, I let go the first blow.

Kaboom! The ear-shattering cymbal runs down the corridors of the dungeon, as a shock of pain reels through my body. The chains and shackles rattle loudly and restrain my full motion.

Frustrated, for the second time I raise my chained feet and slam them into the door. Kaboom! The reverberating crash chases the first down the maze, as a wave of pain and fury blots everything out. Faintly, I hear a few cons follow my example. The piercing, pulsating pain and burning hatred is music to my ears.

Can't continue . . . I collapse, my energy sapped. I've not eaten in . . . in . . . three days. The mind is willing but the body surrenders.

Wandering back through the dark abyss of my mind, I find thinking difficult. What's real and what's fantasy I can't fathom any more. Think . . . think. Straining, I feel the tight band that constricts my head start to loosen and, slowly, the mental haze lifts . . .

Wait until I get my hands on the rat responsible for my being locked up in this shit-hole, stripped naked, freezing, aching, bound, and chained like a wild beast--wanting to kill, murder, and mutilate. Just wait. When I get my hands on him, it'll be sweet, better than that other time . . .

Flashback--Attack at Millhaven, 1985 (all flashbacks are indented)

The torrential downpour grants me an ideal veil to perpetrate my vicious and deliberate attack. The little punk is going to pay and pay dearly. Slinking through my rain cover like a thirsting and territorial alligator stalking its prey, I weave quietly through the steady sheet of rain with vicious intent in heart and mind. What do they say around here? Any day is a good day to die in this rat-infested place.

I eye my unsuspecting victim as he strolls casually along the narrow track yard in Millhaven. The little jerk is unaware of my presence, oblivious to his vulnerability. In an instant, he's swallowed into my wrath. I emerge from the falling rain, dripping with anger and am in all earnest going to inflict serious bodily harm. Had he not jeopardized my life only days before? He certainly had.

Under the steady sheet pouring down from the heavens, my victim pleads and begs for his rotten life. Heart palpitating, blood rushing, I know the tower guards are blinded by the downfall. I can't even see the armed screws in their fortified turrets. My target is caught and hopeless.

Deathly fury numbs the tight anxiety gripping my chest. The would-be assassin, already defeated, is in serious danger of losing his life. He's in dreadful shock at the sight of my contorted face as I rush upon his frail carcass. I ignore his muffled screams and incessant pleadings--he's all mine to do with as I please.

With one leap, I pounce like a crazed cougar and tackle him to the ground with such force he's knocked almost unconscious. Shocked and terrified, his ribs give to the force of the blow and his breath is stolen. Rolling expertly on top of him, I sit heavily on his sunken chest as he gasps for air. With one hand I pull his dirty blond locks to the cold hard ground, and my knees lock his skinny tattooed arms to his sides, as I slam the palm of my other hand over his gaping mouth. He's flat on his back and completely powerless.

Releasing my hand from his mouth, I clench my fist and raise it high over my head. I look directly into his pleading face. Terror visits. His dark and sunken blue eyes seem so empty and helpless...

Glaring through the veil of fury into his twisted face, I hiss that he's about to die and I'm about to receive twenty-five years for it. That's the law of the land and how problems are dealt with in here. We go to the limit and play for keeps in the Haven.

Lips quivering, he weeps as a child and begs for his life. Eyes burning with anger, I raise my clenched fist a little higher and take careful aim at his strained and exposed throat

--that's it for him . . .

The shuffling of many feet jolts me back to the present. What the hell do they think they're doing? My food slot opens and the screw's ugly pockmarked face intrudes on my privacy. I recommend he not remove my cuffs because I'll drive my clenched fists into his strained and exposed throat.

Which one will try me? Let them bring four to five of their best and let's fight to the end. I'll break a few bones but won't kill anybody on purpose. At least not here and now. I'll just kick, punch, knee, and elbow a few of them. They'll be hospitalized, but it'll be better to take a beating than to visit my makeshift prison when I get out.

I'm moving to Kingston and not back home to Sudbury when I'm released, and they can't stop me. I'll go into hiding and catch them all--one at a time.

Chapter 3
Demented Dimensions

The dull hum of the automated engine slides open the door of my cell, revealing five ugly coppers. Their fat bellies bulge under dull gray shirts, and I visualize what a smear of fresh spilled blood would look like on their crisp gray pleated slacks. What, I wonder, would it feel like to drive my

hand through their ribs? Oooooh, how I wish I could slam these rotten coppers. I'd go right through them--rip their cold hearts right out.

Countless hands grapple with me. I wish they'd stay away from me. Where do they think they're taking me? The corridor seems so large, so bright. My eyes are watery and squinting, and the powerful medicinal antiseptics cling to my nostrils, leaving a bitter aftertaste. The steam from the hot shower across the hall reminds me of the hot cascades they'll get in my prison. Yes, I'll toss caldrons of boiling water on their naked flesh.

Can't they see I don't care if I shower? I hate their ugly contorted faces. I want to stay locked up and dirty like an animal until the doors open for me. I want this memory fresh and want it to fuel me.

The screws look dreadful and ominous. Have they not come right out of the walls? Dull gray countenances give them the appearance of animated goblins. Yes, the tyrants are molded from prison walls. They feed and thrive on one another. Their insidiousness is bred through the concrete slabs of this inferno. They're a bunch of sewer rats.

Scalding hot water peels layers of urine and excrement from my body as my heavy chains clang hollowly in the cramped metal cubicle. The bastards can clean my body but they can never wash out the beast within. Don't they know my mind belongs to me, and my soul is not theirs to tamper with? There are certain dimensions not accessible to others' influence. My spirit is not within their corrupt sphere or anywhere they're acquainted with.

The damn leather restraining belt buckle is cold against my navel and I'm left with no mobility. These sick mothers will have to remove my chains if I'm to wash my hair and body fully. They'll have to suck up now, as I'm being released in a few days. I know the mad doctor forced them to comply with humanitarian conditions.

The water ceases to run and I must push the rounded steel knob for another warm cascade. The silvery chain running from my shackles, through the leather-restraining belt and to my cuffs limits my movements. I can barely reach. Tiptoeing, I jump slightly and press the cool knob in. The spray is light but I'm warming up. I can feel my toes and my bluish feet are turning pink.

The shower stops and the copper with flapping jowls and dark complexion ambles toward my cell. He thinks I'm going to walk back inside my pit voluntarily. To hell with him, he'll have to take me by force. I'm still chained and shackled, so it should be easy. I'm not going back into that suffocating pit. I'm not that institutionalized, nor that tamed and domesticated. We're at odds and I'll never stop seeing this madhouse and these puppet masters for what they are. I'm not some automated mindless robot. I refuse to go back to my hole, pig.

The brick walls in my tiny quarters are simply room dividers and nothing more. I see beyond the physical limitations of this beast. I've never failed to see the fences and see them for what they are. They can restrain the physical but can never limit my free spirit.

Three burly screws seize my arms, lift and drag me towards my hole. Furious, I spit in their face and see terror in their eyes. My body is cleansed but my heart and mind are polluted. Tensing my body, I try to spread my legs but the leg irons cut into my ankles. These amputating alloys hurt. They better get their hands off me or I'll bite the skinny copper's nose clean off.

Releasing their grip, they attempt to reason with me. Are they nuts? Reason vacated me years ago. Vengeance is my only preoccupation. I'm convinced--I'm going to Kingston and I'll kill many of them. They have tormented me for too long. Their time is coming. The slime balls won't find me either. I'll be smart and stealthy. Can these assholes see what's inside this body? Not a chance. Their crazed eyes see bulging biceps and striated pectorals. They look at a mask of hatred and a figure of madness, but they can't see the depths of my soul.

Cast back into my confining chamber of horror, I hear the door slam shut. I stare blankly at the solid blue metal and smash my fists into its surface. The reverberating echo startles the screws. I feel no pain.

The coppers are terrified and none dare confront me in a battle. They're afraid for their lives and I know it. Why are they trying to be reasonable today? Hypocrites, it's too late for niceties. For weeks, months, and years they've treated me callously and provoked me endlessly. I want and will get their sweet asses.

The screws march away as I sit on my tiny steel cot. I bet they'll come back, remove my chains, grant me food, clothing, and bedding. They can only go so far because I'm going to be released in a few days. Now that's comforting. I'm ready to die for my cause.

My door opens. Here they come. They're so predictable they make me sick. Child's play. The throng bursts into my cell and removes my leg irons and the leather restraining-belt. Their breath fills my room and leaves me sickened. Now that I can move, I want to kick the bearded monstrosity in his bulbous nose. I could kill him if I kick him in the throat or drive the bridge of his nose into his pea brain.

Wow . . . I feel good in my nakedness. I'm the noble savage . . . the vigilante man . . . the one and only avenger . . . the dark angel of death.

The goon squad slowly paces out of my dungeon and the door slams shut with a loud clang. My food slot opens and a scrawny screw asks me to put my cuffed hands out so that he can remove them. Sure, why not? Full and complete mobility. The cuffs slip off and I smash my fists into the steel blue door. The screw backs away in fear, his dead eyes registering shock. What if I had connected that shot to the side of his temple? He could die from such a blow couldn't he? I've so much pent-up hatred, I could kill him with one solid punch.

My arms are undergoing a surge of power, my jaw tightens, and my gut twists in anxiety. Every muscle in my body is taut as steel and ready for battle. My forearms feel like iron bars, my stomach like an oak board, neck muscles constricted and tense. I can't be hurt--not a chance.

As I pace to and fro like a caged tiger, the screws place a neat bundle of clean clothes atop the port tray of my food slot. They pass me a dirty mop and want me to clean my living quarters. These weekly cleanups only serve to mask the stench in this hellhole. What the hell, I've been in the hole for forty days already and need to clean it, or risk getting scabies.

The foul odor of dried excrement and urine mixes with rotten food but I've grown accustomed to it. However, I have to think of the other cons. They could become sick and contract some disease. I swish the wet mop on yellow-colored brick walls and the dried food peels off, leaving a dull stain.

Pushing pools of murky water through the crack of my door, I brush out unidentified objects. Damned stink hole, cramped and suffocating with no sensory stimuli.

Oh noooo--the damned crickets! The suckers are starting again. The little bastards drive me insane. This is more debilitating than any brutal treatment the coppers can administer. I'm forced to do double time. I can't sleep to escape the dreadful reality of my plight. For God sakes, I want to smash anything--anything at all. I must scream "Bastards, come on. Let's do it--bring in a few of your best and give me a shot at the title." Dodging from side to side, I act out a left jab, right kick, and hammer blow to the temple.

I don't believe it. Things just keep getting better. The punk in the next cell wants to meet me in the yard and finish a discussion we had five days ago. The little punk. He already killed a man and now has the balls to threaten me. Ha. What a jerk. I called him and his father an idiot at that time and they said nothing. Asshole, it's easy being tough behind solid steel doors.

Doesn't he know these walls have ears? What if I kill him in the yard? I'll be caught for sure. He's a punk. Wait until I get my hands on his scrawny frame. I'm going to slam my fists and cutting feet into his lanky body and break his skinny fingers one at a time. If he continues to pose a threat, I'll snap his pointy elbows. If he's still threatening, I'll break his ankles.

I'm certain this will disable him, but I wonder if he'll want to retaliate. I'll ask him and, if in doubt, go further in my attack. I don't want to die and abandon my bigger plans. He's an annoyance and possible impediment. I know I'll have to break his nose, his jaw and crack his ribs. I can't kill him because I must get out of this zoo and carry out my plan. The punk will be transferred from this madhouse after the beating and sent to another.

My food slot creaks open, and the damn copper wants my mop. I feel like snapping the handle in half and driving it into his fat gut. Handing me fresh bedding, he leaves a thin mattress outside my door. Do they dare open my cell door? Do they think these amenities have calmed me? They're simpletons, extremely stupid. They should have kept me chained and shackled before offering a mattress. What a bunch of hypocrites. Do they think being nice now will save their lives? Never.

The screw leaves as my door cracks open. Furious, I step into the brightly-lit corridor, haul off and kick the mattress away, and call them on for a fight to the death. They're exasperated with me. Three uniforms safely behind the steel grate, they look on in defeat. If they don't want any more trouble, they should never have lit the fuse.

I'm flipped and want to fight. They push and torment and now I need to feel some contact with these jerk-offs. I have to tense up and wrestle the goons for hours. The coppers don't know what to do with me now. I'm no longer restrained and can fight like the Devil himself. It had taken the assholes an hour to restrain me the first time--it'll take much more effort this time. I'll never be broken. My will is unbending . . . unyielding . . . unbreakable.

It's always been this way with me. Even as a scrawny kid who hardly knew a damn thing, I knew this much. Nobody gives me shit and gets away with it . . .

Flashback--Home Life as a Teen, 1974

On a warm summer day, my buddy Dan and I amble nonchalantly into my house to quench our thirst. I'm listening to Dan cheerfully relating his favorite play of our baseball game victory, when he stops abruptly. Stepping into the brightly-lit kitchen, eyes blinded from the glare of the sun, we stumble into my dear mother and the drunkard. What a heart-wrenching sight to behold.

My mother, her worn and torn pink housecoat thrown loosely over her stooped shoulders, is hunched over the kitchen sink, dark mascara streaming down the length of her pale wet cheeks. Her shoulders slumped and shaking, she's choking back tears. Turning and looking over at Dan, my face turns crimson red as I feel the heat of shame burn my face.

The unshaven, pot-bellied beast stands a few paces from my defenseless mother, his eyes crazed with anger and puffed from the long drinking bout the night before. The creature registers shock as his glassy eyes strain to focus. His jaw agape, the swaying sot licks his thick moist lips as if to speak. The sight of this disgusting creature hovering menacingly above my mother sends waves of hatred, shame, and anger through me.

My mother becomes ever more distraught and concerned with our unexpected arrival. Fear is written on her meek features. She knows how I feel by the look of contempt I burn into her teary eyes.

She seems so helpless and powerless. How could this bastard do this to her? What has he done to her today? And why? I snap. My shame gives way to anger.

Turning abruptly toward Dan, my face red, chest tight from anxiety, I tell him to leave. I know Dan has seen me angry before but never like this.

Shocked and fearful, Dan refuses to leave. The kid is scared and concerned. With light blue eyes pleading, Dan asks if I'll leave with him. I flatly refuse and feel my anger rise. Looking around the tiny kitchen, discomfort setting in and unsure of what to do next, Dan asks if he could remain at the doorway leading to the veranda. Gazing intently into his anxious blue eyes, I advise him to "Stay the hell away and not come close". If the kid wants to see a real life brutal fighting scene he'll see one.

With Dan as my spectator, I decide at that moment to beat this madman in a fight. A fourteen year-old weighing in at one hundred and ten pounds, I'm ready to battle all two hundred and forty pounds of drunkard.

Muscles taut in my chest and abdomen, arms tensed and ready, I clench my fists and jaw and make my way between the drunkard and my mother. I'm pumped and furious. I feel no fear.

My neck muscles strain from the fury, the drunkard and I begin circling one another like Bengal tigers in a pen. Keeping my eyes on his bulging features and hooded eyes, I cross my feet over one another and begin moving cautiously to his right.

Staring contemptuously at him, shaking from fury, I hiss threats into his swollen, distorted face. "You fat prick, that's it. We're not putting up with your fucking shit any more. I'm going to kick your ugly fucking face in and see what the fuck happens here, you . . . you . . . big piece of shit."

The smell of liquor on his raunchy breath angers me even more. The tension mounts steadily as the drunkard looks at me stupidly. I look back intently into his crazed and bloodshot eyes. The bastard won't back away.

At this point, everyone disappears in my mind's eye. My concentration honed, I can barely hear anything and focus on his gross carcass. His fat gut hanging over loose fitting blue denim jeans, the big bruiser weaves in my direction. As my eyes burn into his, my anger and rage multiply.

Circling near the counter, I reach over and grab the eight-inch kitchen blade out of its wooden stand. Squeezing the small plastic handle into the palm of my hand, I feel the muscles of my fingers close together.

My mother's voice reaches a hysterical pitch that pulls me out of my concentration. She's freaking. Alarmed, I'm distracted by her wild hysteria and the drunkard seizes on the opportunity to grab hold of my hand. Very swiftly and powerfully, the grotesque figure turns the blade toward me. He's a lot stronger than I thought.

I'm shocked and scared. Feeling his sweaty palms squeeze my fragile wrist and hand, his crazed eyes burn into mine. I can't break the hold. I'm locked and caught. I can't drop the knife or shake his powerful grip.

Both Dan and my mother are yelling and screaming, but I can't hear what they're saying. The point of the blade is inches from my stomach. Everything

slows. The sounds in the house . . . their voices . . . they're echoing and my mind is reeling in confusion. My arm is caught and this is the end.

The drunkard's alcohol-reeking breath and his stinking, sweaty hairy chest fills my nostrils. His eyes seem so . . . so insane and intent.

Suddenly, the heavy pig lunges forward, throwing his entire bulk behind him. I can't repulse his crushing weight. I'm being forced against the refrigerator, the blade driving for my guts.

My back crashes into the fridge as mountains of liquor bottles clang and shatter inside. My arm still extended, the pointed blade is fast plunging toward my exposed stomach. I'm going to die.

In a divinely instinctive move, I slide my body slightly to the side. The pointed blade misses my stomach, crashes bluntly on the refrigerator door, snaps cleanly from its short handle and falls with a clang to the floor. I'm left holding the small plastic handle.

Shocked and unbelieving, the drunkard and I hesitate--everything is suspended in time. The prick almost killed me.

Trembling and slowly coming to my senses, I look into the drunkard's face. He's incredulous and bewildered. I seize upon the moment of hesitation to push myself off the refrigerator door, the momentum propelling the disbelieving drunkard and me into the middle of the kitchen. Facing each other, we stand motionless a few seconds, unsure what to do next. Everything has become deathly quiet.

Tremors flowing through my abdomen and shaking the violent images from my mind, I step back a few feet and turn to look at Dan and my mother. I'm severely shaken. I narrowly escaped being killed. This thing is not turning out right. My stomach is in knots and my mind in a cloud.

Walking over to Dan, I advise him in a trembling voice to leave immediately as things are going to get "very fucking messy." Looking into my friend's apprehensive eyes, I declare, "I will kill this big prick one way or another, so you better leave." Although very scared, I know this will be the battle to end all battles.

Traumatized, Dan implores me to leave with him. My little buddy is near tears. "No way, Dan, I'm not fucking leaving. I'm going to give it to this fat fucker. The prick is going down."

Without another word or thought for my friend, I turn away and make my way to the middle of the kitchen in an attempt to pacify my frantic mother. Mom is stricken with grief, rambling some nonsense between sobs.

With as much compassion and concern as I can summon for her at the time, I place my hands on her shoulders and tell her not to move. She's still crying and protesting when I turn away. Her protesting only serves to deepen the anxiety stirring in the pit of my gut.

Scanning the kitchen, I see the idiot moving to the far side of the room, making a slow retreat into the hallway. The bastard thinks this is over.

Determined, I walk toward the beast. I'm soon within two feet of his fat bulging figure. I'm very calm for some reason. I have my attack plan mapped out in my mind.

The thoughts of the many nights I stayed awake with the sounds of crashing dishes come dancing into my mind. The countless times this piece of shit kept me awake, and the many times he made my mother cry well up in my mind like a hurricane. Years of pent-up hatred surface. I don't care how big and ugly the bastard is. I have to put a stop to this fucking bullshit, even if it means getting killed in the process.

The drunkard raises his hands, as I close the distance between us. Reaching quickly under his hairy chin in one fluid movement, the palms of both hands firmly in place, I push my entire weight off the floor.

His head crashes into the corner of the wall with such force our hanging picture plate almost falls off its mounting hooks. I'm sure his head is split wide open. Looking into his cloudy eyes, I watch him slide to the floor with a loud piercing yelp, his face wincing in pain.

Hovering above his crumbled body, I consider kicking his face in, but he's not moving. Without looking at mom, I stride out of the house.

Sounds of countless army boots echo off the walls, and the image of the fat drunk expands, then dissolves into a gargantuan goon squad. Their body-length clear-plastic shields, domed headgear, padded chest-vests, and swaying Billy clubs create a wall down the hall, as they march in unison like an army. I know this is a psychological ploy to try to scare me. Do they think such tactics work? I'm not afraid of their antics and power trips. Let me show them how to create fear in cold hearts. I can go right through their petty walls. Who'll be the first hero to come within striking distance? Who's willing to lose an eye for the cause? I'll return to my cell when I want to, and not when they tell me.

As they approach, their contorted features peer out from under plastic-covered facemasks. Anxious voices demand I return to my cell, or else . . .

I know their motives are fear and control, so I won't accede at all. The human wall slowly closes the distance. Assuming my side karate stance, my body becomes loose and my concentration honed. I throw vicious sidekicks and the all-powerful human wall ceases abruptly. Ha. The idiots are scared. They hear my fists smash against the walls and know what happened to the cons after fighting me. They're terrified but know I've never hit any of them before. Today, however, could be different--one good punch on one of their necks, and it could snap like a dried twig.

Approaching ever more slowly, they surround me with their three-foot long Billy clubs swaying dangerously close. Grasping their sticks tightly with padded leather gloves, the goons stand, eagerly waiting to find the opening where their sticks can crash against my bones. Turning, I keep an eye and ear on all of them. None moves an inch.

Body tensing, I feel the surge of hatred rush through my body. I can kill with one punch and I know it.

The small copper with the neatly trimmed black moustache wants to be a hero. I see intent in his dark hooded eyes. The coward has a small-man complex. If he swings his club, I'll catch it on my rock hard stomach and seize his weapon. I'll pull him near, knee him in the ribs, twist his neck, and throw him to the floor.

Let the idiot try and hit me. I can't feel a thing anyway. The damned thing will bounce off my body. He's also too damned slow. The little bastard makes a move toward me, and when I feint in his direction, he pulls back his club. I laugh and hiss. The coward. Let him come and swing his club. I'll snap it and crack it over his empty skull.

I'm still pumped, but the tense standstill ends when I decide I had better return to my cell and not jeopardize my release, due in just a few days. I can't adequately protect myself without incurring charges for assault causing bodily harm. They'll only get the tear gas and shoot their famous Mace. As far as I'm concerned, it's good enough I got the cowards down here. The goons will be called again, so they might as well stay alert.

Chapter 4
(Flashback - Boozem Buddies - 1967)

I'm at the mercy of my own thoughts; my mind my only real and faithful companion, but even that's slowly ebbing and retreating into itself…denying me its comfort and distraction. Fedor Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo would understand where I'm wandering. Maybe Rousseau would empathize with my reveries. Hobbes could identify with this nasty, brutish and…and…this life is not short.

The mind is a marvelous mechanism, able to endure this torture and isolation for so long. The body resilient and the will fortified with fury. Cast away from society, I see life objectively now. Not tainted by so many material distractions with silence supreme. I can turn my eyes inward like Montaigne, Augustine and Descartes. I can become a philosopher and address the moral metamorphosis consuming men in these barbaric dungeons…I see and feel it…

Human nature is not pure. Men are dark, ugly savages seeking to fulfill and satisfy their demented penchant for cruelty. What good lies in me? None. I don't think I ever had a good bone in my skeleton. I'm an empty vessel being tossed on a sea of venom. Fate plays cruel jokes with its creatures. In constant collision, we create a course of ruin, despair and annihilation.

My tiny food slot pops open, yanking me out of my thoughts. A cold meal is served on a thin metal tray. Should I throw it at the jiggling jerk or eat it? Better not, I'll eat it this time; I'm famished. Eating my stewed beef, I begin to think about how I've come to prison in the first place. Should I think about the last bit or the first? Where will my mind take me today? What show do I want to play in my head today? Home life as a kid…

(Flashback - Boozem Buddies - 1967)

…King Alcohol is the monarch of our feudal/feuding family. It's safe to say my mother and her boyfriend have become shivering denizens of King Alcohol's mad realm. Its putrid pestilence permeates our moral fabric and pollutes every aspect of our lives. The intoxicating vapor corrupts every root of our family tree. Affected by its poisonous mist, we're swimming in its cesspool of misery, chaos and heartache. Confusion, havoc and terror become close companions and refuse to abdicate their tyrannical reign.

Crown Royal draped in its purple pouch and gold ribbon hangs like the sword of Damocles in the side door of our beer-filled refrigerator. Molson Export is stacked atop one another like stones of an impenetrable castle. Practically speaking, one would have to remove food to accommodate the many liters of alcohol in the small refrigerator, and that's precisely what occurs. Fruit juice is replaced by Molson muscle, brick cheese by Crown Royal. Vegetables and fruits fall to the army of commander Vodka and carbonated drinks. Milk gives way to Crème de Menthe and Bailey's maneuvers, and so the battle rages.

The insanity in the home is frightful. Coming home from school for lunch one day, I discover my mother in her housecoat with mascara streaming down her pale face. The house is a veritable mess and so is she. I'm confused and don't understand she's hung-over and has been sick all morning.

I check my disdain and pity toward her. She looks so pitiful and weak. This isn't the mother I've known all these years. That mother who cradled me in her tender-loving arms is…is…gone.

The arguments at night when dishes careen and crash on walls and screaming matches last into the small hours of the morning. I awaken in fright and don't know what to think, how to feel and how to act, so I remain firmly wrapped in my blankets, deathly frightened of what's going to happen next.

Looking around my dark room, I ask myself where my big brother Michel is, where my eldest sister Lisette has disappeared to, and why my other older sister Monique is not around. Poor little Suzanne is in another room and I wonder if she can hear the same as I…

Suzanne and I are left alone to contend with King Alcohol and his crazed victims…

…A brown manila envelope slides under my door. What the hell could it be? I haven't received a letter in years. Ripping it open, I see inscribed therein something from the National Parole Board. Reading the contents carefully, I'm enraged. I can't believe it. The pricks are serious about their intent to "gate" me. They want to keep me locked up until the expiration of my sentence. It's a

dangerous offender application. They want to keep me for another eighteen months. What am I going to do?

I was supposed to be out five months ago. The bastards are making me redo five months loss of remission from a previous sentence. That's what's called double jeopardy in jurisprudence. Their sentence calculation and parole regulations are clearly unconstitutional. I can't get my Writ of Habeas Corpus filed because they're keeping me in this hole. Charlatans! Tyrants! They'll pay and pay dearly.

The screw with the smart mouth and arrogant yuppie looking face returns and says the kangaroo court judge wants to see me now. I set fire to the yard a few days ago. Now they want to take me to their kangaroo court. I'm not going to court peacefully. They'll have to drag me in and I'll fight every inch of the way. They're just trying to make sure the Parole Board gates me. This is a set up. They're postponing the inevitable and are bringing greater condemnation upon themselves.

They tried to place me in the special handling units twice. Those infamous black pits reserved for the most dangerous criminals in the penitentiary. Thankfully, I won that battle…

I have too much on my plate. I'm going to snap at the seams. The pressure is too much. How did it all get started? I'm getting really frustrated and desperate. How am I going to deal with the Parole Board? What if they gate me? I'm civil dead. I have no rights.

Screw them, put it to me one more time. I won't die and perish in this hellhole. Nobody is going to kill me here and I won't jeopardize my freedom by killing another. I have loftier goals. I'm the destined one.

Five burly screws come to my door and it looks like we're going to get down and dirty. The whole sad scene is going to start all over again. Just because of that stool pigeon in the yard that's lucky to be alive. If he had stabbed that guy like he was supposed to, I wouldn't have had to enforce the codes we know so well. Some of these guys talk the talk but can't walk the walk.

My cell door slides open and the goons rush in and lay hold of my arms, legs and torso. Touching me, I despise their invasion of my being. Wriggling and twisting in every imaginable way, they're having a hard time pinning me down. Breathing heavily, the fat bulging goon with the dark circled eyes places the Mace gun hard against my eye. I spit on his shiny new black boots and tell him to shoot. Go ahead dick-breath.

They manage to roll me on my stomach and secure my hands behind me. The cuffs cut deep into my wrists. Pulling hard against the steel, I numb the pain out right away. They try to raise me but I wrap my leg around the fat porker's thigh. We're caught.

Indignant and very pissed off, they lift my arms as I'm forced to tiptoe. My shoulders feel like they're ripping apart at their sockets. I throw myself into the air and brace my bare feet on the steel doorframe. They can't push me out. Yanked back violently inside my cell, they place shackles around my ankles and hustle me out into the corridor. We were just in the corridor a few moments before with the goon squad and their riot gear. What a sickening routine.

Dragging me twenty yards, the doors to the kangaroo court are opened and a throng of heaving coppers lead me inside. They're perspiring and breathing deep. I'm red-faced from straining and my muscles scream for mobility. I feel like I've wrestled for hours.

The kangaroo court judge looks like an idiot sitting on his elevated bench. He's looking at me through his pop bottle bifocals. I scream and hurl insults knowing I'm guilty in his biased eyes like the thousand times before. He never listens to my side. Stuff it pencil neck. You look retarded in your ugly brown suit. Looking intently through thick glasses, he quickly pronounces

my fate and adds a few days to my hole sentence. I laugh in his sunken face. I serve my time either in the hole or in segregation; I really don't care where. Eighteen more months at most.

Dragged back, I'm slammed into my dungeon, cuffed and shackled. At least I had a meal and have some clothing. My shit house is clean and I had a shower. I feel pretty damn good considering where I am. This is nothing…sweet dick all…time is time is time.

What difference does it make where I serve my time in this hellish dimension? Dante's Inferno was a lot worse than this rendition of Hades…this circle of hell. The inner depths are not stratified. There's no distinction made between motive and the nature of crime. We're all lumped together.

The skinny mustachioed screw appears at my cell window and says he wants my cuffs and shackles removed. They're doing this because of the Doc. Eat this dick head, I like the feel of cold hard steel on my body. Come and take them off if you think you're man enough. He looks away as echoed sounds of heavy footsteps are fast approaching. Here we go again…

Chapter 5
(Flashback - Mike and the Monster - 1970)

The metal slab of my cell slides open to a throng of earnest faces. The screws, grimacing faces with twisting mouths, look pissed off. I have a fight coming. They want my chains. They summoned the help of this huge beast weighing over three hundred and eighty pounds. Towering at six and a half feet, with nostrils flaring and eyes glistening, the black bearded beast's shoulders fills the entrance of my cell. The other screws cower behind his menacing figure.

Rolling off my steel cot, my chains grate against the side. My feet firmly on the cold hard cement, my shackles drag across the hollowed floor. Squaring off with the mountainous creature, I feel no fear. He'll be humbled and their best will be made to realize their weakness. Size is no match for fury. Bring in your mammoth monster…

(Flashback - Mike and the Monster - 1970)

> …Hailing the arrival of gallant gale force winds, I'm struck with awe and appreciation as torrential pellets beat their rhythmic drum on thin panes of our foggy bubble picture window. Howling fiercely, taunting twisters lead the turbulent parade, when seizing giant leaves from nature's floor, they twirl and twist to whistling power lines. Taking up the flank, columns of

proud Poplars sway wide umbrella branches over neatly cropped edges leaning in unison inches from the finely combed grassy knoll.

Excitement swells in my bosom like water-laden thunderclouds racing in the coal horizon. I know today is just *perfect* for what's coming. Fallen power lines, slinking like water snakes have cast us in the heart of darkness…

The horror…the horror…It's near…

CRACKKABOOM. Booming blasts of bellowing thunder resound in the ashen sky, penetrating my palpitating heart. Chest beating madly with eyes opened wide, I bolt quickly away from the foggy windowpanes of our thin bubble picture window.

Chest flooded with chilling anxiety and ears pounding from the aftershocks of bombing boomers, my mind returns to the utter terror and sheer horror that will grip young souls.

My musing is interrupted, when suddenly, spasmodic spears of rod lightning slice the sable sky. Flung from fissures from the fuming firmament, fiery flames fly through sheets of weaving waterfalls. Twisting their knotted fingers, they dart into darkened woods.

Partially blinded with ears ringing in numbness, fear fuses with anticipation as I ponder about the horrific events about to unfold...

HELL, it's really the perfect day. What with all the winds, rain, thunder and lightning…I couldn't ask for anything better…

Turning away from the large picture window, I'm hypnotized by flickering candles casting goblin silhouettes dancing on white washed walls. The shifting shapes shoot shivers through to my toes as goose bumps ripple across my shivering frame.

Swallowing hard, I shuffle sneakily toward the darkened stairway leading to the basement as floorboards squeak hollowly underfoot. An eerie sensation that I'm being followed washes through my rigid spine, when turning abruptly, I peer quickly over my hunched shoulder at my stretched shadow hovering menacingly on checkered patterned tiles.

Jeez, I'm just like Socrates on the Wizard of OZ show...

Chuckling silently to myself, a mischievous grimace cuts across my freckled face as I think of the sheer horror that's coming.

The little ones are going to experience nightmares for weeks on end…

Executing the narrow stairs to the cold and dark basement, I enter quietly into the rec. room with my thoughts on Gerry lurking quietly and patiently in our cavernous cellar. Complete with gargoyle mask, heavy chain, oversized coat and hairy old mittens; IT/Gerry is anxiously waiting for a chap to be thrown in IT's powerful grasp.

Peering curiously over at my older brother Michel, he moves the bright glare of the flashlight away from my squinting eyes. Straining through black spots peppering my vision, I catch sight of his small hand scratching the black cow lick on his short-cropped mane.

That's the signal.

Anticipation bursting in my anxious chest, Michel's eyes sparkle with excitement as he casts a surreptitious glance toward the boiler room. Raising his eyebrow, his dimples crease his young freckled face.

We're set to go…

The youngsters already seated on the large flowery sofa with mounting anticipation swelling in their anxious chests, watch in apprehension as Michel and I summon the unpredictable "monster". The kids understand that only Michel and I can communicate with the monster for they have witnessed this terror trip in the past. The tiny tykes know very well that Michel and I enjoy a special relationship with IT as we feed IT.

All eyes carefully trained on the dark and damp dungeon of doom, the monster's boisterous belch shatters the tense silence and resounds deafly in our quiet basement. A spine-tingling guttural-growl sends waves of terror into the kids' fearful hearts as they shudder and cringe in absolute fright.

GRRRRRrowling viciously, IT "asks" if one of the kids could offer morsels of food or…maybe…brief companionship?

Listening intently to the beast's dreadful request, Michel and I turn our attention away from the dreary den and carefully scan the room to interpret on behalf of the creature. Looking over the many taut faces squished on the sofa, we ask which kid feels brave enough to face the bestial THING today?

Silence…nobody moves or says a word…waiting…a wall of rigid bodies…masks of fear and trepidation…silence…sunken bodies in the sofa… The moments seem temporarily suspended in the deafening silence.

WAIT. There's movement…here he comes…it's Red…he's fidgeting nervously…his little friends looking at him worriedly…his faded blue denim sneakers shuffling…squirming a bit…but standing…still shaky…

Delighted, my brother and I, fraught with excitement and anticipation, witness the courageous chap pull himself slowly away from the relative safety of his fearful friends. Standing hesitantly, the tiny soul pulls his bright yellow pullover jacket down to his waist and stealthily approaches the darkened cellar with fear gripping his young face.

The cute little fella, brushing a trembling hand over a shock of red hair, casts a nervous glance over his slumped shoulder toward the sofa in the hope of receiving encouragement for his epic journey. Staring blankly ahead, tiny bodies hold tightly unto each other, white knuckled as tension mounts with every step he takes.

Letting out a heavy sigh of disappointment, little Red resumes his trek forward. Face tight, eyes squinting, he tiptoes ever so slowly toward the darkened doorway. Silently approaching, he's but a few paces away. Inching forward and biting his lower lip, little Red strains to hear anything.

Suddenly, IT belches and grunts. Cutting through the tense silence, the deep hollowed sounds cause the young chap to stiffen and halt abruptly in his tracks. Body rigid, Red looks deeply into our faces with sweet, innocent puppy-dog eyes. His fearful brown eyes seek some sane and rational interpretation of that dreadful, heart-stopping guttural sound emanating from the dark dungeon of doom.

Turning away from the fear-filled youngster, Michel and I, with deep concern written on our faces, peer in the direction of the dungeon and translate IT's guttural belch as best we can. Looking at the terrified kid with confidence, we reassure the fearful lad that IT's not in a foul mood whatsoever; IT's just expressing ITSELF. We doubt IT's hungry enough to eat a tot…oops, a lot today.

Rigid as a board, eyes opened wide, the young lad proceeds ever more cautiously toward the entrance of the cellar. Desperately desirous to catch a glimpse of the elusive beast nobody has ever lived to tell about is his chief motivator.

Dead silence hangs like a dark cloud as the anxious kids look on from the large sofa. Hard driving rain beating against our thin windowpanes, and the shuffling sounds of the foolish lad's footsteps, drawing ever nearer to destination and fate, echo emptily in the basement.

With red curly head leaning forward, the courageous chap places his quivering palm on the wooden doorframe and strains to peer inside the dark cellar. Head crooked and neck stretched, little RED tilts his slender body forward…on the balls of his tiny feet now…he's almost there…almost…a little closer.

Powerfully and without warning, Michel and I thrust the unsuspecting lad headlong into the damp and dark dungeon. The small body lurches forward with arms outstretched. With terror-stricken shrieks and high pitch hysterical cries piercing the deafening silence, his diminutive figure is swallowed into the dark abyss.

Mind racing and blood flowing, the mad vapor of crippling fear settles on masks of fear.

CRACKKABOOM…blinding sheets of lighting flash in the dark basement as ear-shattering thunder explode. Smashing through the mist of terror, the flash reveals knotted pink knees knocking without respite.

The rush of adrenaline pumping through our veins, Michel and I look quickly behind us and see the terrified kids catch their breath as their small bodies stiffen in dreadful fear. Grabbing and seizing each other tightly, they turn their contorted faces away in complete fright. Skinny legs and tiny white arms twist in every way, as rigid young bodies squirm and curl atop one another like worms in a small tin can.

Rolling thunder rumbling in the ominous sky, the hapless victim is greeted with bone-chilling growls. Captured with powerful hairy claws, the gasping child is seized with such fright that his breath is stolen.

Looking in all directions, Michel and I scream and holler in confusion and terror. Staring intently into the widening sockets of our guests, Michel and I implore them to help us extricate their endangered buddy from the monster's powerful grip. None dare move an inch. The little rascals are paralyzed with fright and terror unparalleled.

CRACKKABOOM…heart stopping thunder and blinding lightning explode in the darkened basement and send shocks of panic in their wake as Michel and I, hysterical and panic-stricken, beg earnestly for assistance.

We're certain the little fella in the cellar is being eaten whole. Shaking uncontrollably, tears rolling from terrified features, not a soul can melt the ice-cold fear enveloping them.

The young victim, screaming hysterically in a mad scramble to escape, claws earnestly and punches viciously…but he's unable to break the starving beast's powerful clutch.

A seeming eternity later, Little Red, white faced, frantic, weeping and terror-stricken, emerges from the cellar and scrambles madly up the stairs leading outside. Poor Little Red, tears rolling down wet soaked cheeks, misses his footing, trips in fright, and falling, frantically picks himself up and bounds up the narrow wooden stairs two and three at a time.

How Michel and I enjoy watching the kids scurry madly about with tiny hands grasping their gasping chests. Laughter swells in our bosom and we can barely contain the emotional rush.

Fuelling the pandemonium, Michel and I begin to run around in a frantic panic. Crazed and completely incoherent, we gape at the kids on the sofa holding tightly unto one another like people on a shipwreck. Hollering and screaming hysterically, Michel and I loosen their deathly grip by telling them IT's coming out to eat them for real. The beast has fooled us all. IT's actually very distraught. IT…IT…IT's furious at having been robbed of company.

The damn THING is absolutely famished and completely rabid. Anyone could become IT's next victim. The THING eats people. That's how IT lives. We confess. IT has eaten little Paul only last week. IT didn't want us to tell anyone. SORRY.

Run. Run. Faster. GADDD…

Abandoning our guests on the sofa, Michel and I dash hurriedly out of the basement followed closely by a long line of stricken souls. Countless feet pumping up the narrow steps, we spill through the front door of our suburban home as neighbors watch in bewilderment and apprehension. Kids screaming and crying, they run in a full sprint the two to three blocks home without once daring to look back. Little feet pelting through pools of deep water, the high winds whip their flapping garments.

The horror, the horror…is IT in pursuit…?

…That damned monster is indeed in pursuit. Go ahead and try to lay hold of me you fat frigate and see what happens. He'll suffer a stroke for the effort he exerts on me. The hulking figure lumbers in my direction but I see fear in his anxious gray eyes. I'm chained and shackled you coward. What will you do when I come for you when I'm out of this dungeon? You're going to be a prize catch for my prison.

Rushing in, they lunge headlong as the big copper's monstrous weight crashes into my body. Tripping because of my shackles, I'm thrown to the floor, as my back slams hard into the side of my bed. My forehead narrowly misses the bastard's jutted chin. I wanted to make it look like an accident. Maybe next time. The elephant keeps his sweaty tonnage on me as I struggle to breathe.

Cuffs cutting deeply into my pinned wrists, the fall has caused the shackles to bruise my ankles. My back is sore and…and…I can't breathe. Rolled on my stomach, someone is pressing

a hard object against the back of my skull. It hurts like hell and it feels like a Billy club. Face pressed against the cool floor…I can't see…the damn floor stinks of shit. Experiencing a surge of burning fury and hatred, I manage to roll on my back. Looking up into their strained and sweaty faces, I spit a huge gob of phlegm. Bingo, right in the prick's mouth. Eat THAT copper.

The screw registers shock and is incredulous. The skinny one with the twisted nose quickly grabs a hold of my hair and pulls my head back violently. I can't feel any pain. They can't hit me either…there are too many mangled bodies in the line of fire. They couldn't hurt me anyway the weak sluggards…

Uh oh, I'm being turned on my stomach again. We've been wrestling and straining for a few minutes and I hear their heavy breathing.

The shackles are removed and the screws slowly pace backward and out into the corridor. My door slides shut with a loud clang, sealing out their ugly faces. They've left me cuffed with a mattress in my cell and clothes on my back.

Struggling to my feet, I sit on the side of my cot and feel the dull aching throb at the base of my skull. Parched lips and dried throat, I'm thirsty as hell but I have no running water in my cell. It would be difficult to get a drink since these cuffs are bound behind my back. Wait, maybe the toilet water? I may have to slurp some up.

A stack of blue sheets slide under my door. I know they're institutional charges. Probably a few on disobeying a direct order, using profane language and maybe some for threatening. This will make good toilet paper.

Hmmm…are they taking me to court again? I'm not going to move from this shit house. I better rest and prepare for another assault from the cavalry.

Chapter 6
(Flashback - Juvenile Justice - 1968)

Waiting, waiting, waiting…I'm not waiting however, I'm just being. Being here…just simply passing. There's no sense in thinking about waiting. It's just a matter of being…I simply don't care where I am, what I think or how I feel about anything anymore. I'm reduced to nothingness…an empty vessel passing through a cruel abyss…

What was John Howard and the Quakers thinking when they tried to introduce humanitarian conditions into prisons? It's impossible. Opposites can't reside in the same place at the same time. Yes, they boast of their intellectual capacity, when in reality, they know nothing of which they propose. Theory is not practical.

Sitting in this suffocating shaft. My hole in the wall. Society's parking lot made expressly for the deviant. Out of sight and out of mind. Waiting, no, just passing until the doors of hell spring open to remind everyone of their apathetic acceptance. A testing ground, a human laboratory. Gladiator school. The Roman's famous lion's den.

I wish the yellow-bellied low life cowards would give me a shot at the title in a fair hand to hand combat. I can fight very well so they wouldn't be disappointed. In fact, is there anyone in this damnation den with a fifth degree black belt or something? Bring him in…

…The heavyset screw is muscular and thinks he can fight. Assuming a boxing stance, this big black bastard has thick arms and a barrel chest. No problem, watch this asshole. He's not just fighting a man with an athletic build. Oh no, he's pitting himself in a dual den against someone who has madness and fury unsurpassed. My anger and hatred will cut right through him…I'll take him out and finish off the rest of them…

Bouncing lightly on his toes, I see the stooge looking into my eyes…bad mistake. Placing my feet firmly on the floor, I jump quickly to his side and let go of a vicious left sidekick to his knee. It snaps like a twig. Screaming in excruciating pain, his buddies are terrified. Spinning around, I square off with the others…they remain motionless…mouth agape…

…I've been fighting as far back as I can remember. Eating, sleeping and fighting are second nature to me. I'm a natural athlete when it comes to fighting. Patrick Roy is a natural goaltender but I'm a natural street fighter. It's something inborn and it slowly develops through persistent use…

(Flashback - Juvenile Justice - 1968)

…The big burly principal looms in my direction as his shadow casts a dark cloud of death and doom over my diminutive figure. I'm a grade four, 60 pound kid. Bellowing, he orders me to remove my denim jacket and head to his office. From the look on his menacing face, I know I'm in serious trouble.

Taking giant strides, his heavy footsteps echo in the recesses of my spine. I'm shaking uncontrollably and dare not look at him. He looks so mean and…and so angry. Am I guilty of anything? I wonder where the initiator of the fracas is. How is it I'm the only one to visit the dreaded, ill-tempered principal? The stupid kid hit me first.

I've heard about the "visits" to the principal's office. Rumors abound about the Sermon on the Mount followed by loud cracks of thunder. These thoughts make me shudder as nervousness cramps my stomach. I feel queasy as the palms of my hands begin to sweat. The last thing I want are sweaty-palms with the possibility of receiving the beaver-tail treatment. I know that heavy rubber whip caused better boys to break down.

Tossing my jacket into my locker, I drag myself over to the dreaded office. As I sit waiting for the principal, a thought crosses my mind. I heard that if I were to place a strand of hair in the palm of my hand, the force of the blow from that rubber whip could split my hand open and cause a major downpour of blood.

Yes, that will surely fix the principal and his whipping mentality. With little regard for my pink naked hand, I pull a strand of hair from my head and place it carefully on the centerline inside my quivering palm.

The hulking figure motions me inside his dungeon with a thick hairy finger. Walking into his den as courageously as I can, I'm trying to control the constant knocking of my knees and the jitters playing havoc in my gut. The need to proceed to the boys-room is overpowering.

My anxious condition is partially alleviated by the comforting knowledge that once the blow connects with the hair in my hand, untold of grief will rock the foundations of the entire educational hierarchy.

Loud, reverberating sounds signal the start of the famous Sermon on the Mount. The stentorian pitch emanating from this huge carcass would leave Lucianno Pavarotti envious of his best crescendo. The fat jowls flapping wildly, his heaving chest sucks in huge amounts of oxygen. It's obvious to this beast I'm guilty with no explanation necessary.

The famous sermon ceases abruptly as the beast extracts the dreaded beaver-tail from his desk.

Clutching the strand of my single hair in a death-grip, I slowly extend my tiny hand. I stand face to belly with this militant authoritarian. Perspiration trickles down his bulging jowls as he methodically rolls up his sleeves. This thing weighs no less than four hundred pounds of fat and blubber. What a disgusting sight.

Smelling his perspiration mix with his medicinal after-shave, I begin to feel the sweat forming in the palms of my quivering hands.

My arm extended, the palm of my tiny hand is fully exposed. I stand holding my breath waiting for the assault to begin.

The menacing creature registers surprise. His bulging eyes hood in anger and indignation. With a quick sweep of his giant paw he brushes the hair away from my trembling hand. I'm caught in my duplicity. The principal bellows as his thick lips contort in anger.

He seals my fate via five lashes…

Without a moment's hesitation, he raises his tree trunk arm high over his head. The moments seem temporarily suspended. The silence is deafening in the confining cavern. The slim rubber strap is so small in his giant paw.

The strap begins to descend at such incredible speed, I swear I can hear molecules and atoms cracking in the gush of wind. Instinctively, I move my hand.

Whack…the howling creature strikes himself in the groin area with such force I feel the hot air gushing from his expanded chest. The rush of hot wind brushes across my face as his neck stiffens. Are these horns growing on his head? His arms are as thick as poplars and I can almost smell the sap. His massive head is affixed to his gargantuan frame with thick cables.

Straightening his back, the principal composes himself…before I know it.

Crack...my stomach in knots and mind racing, the penetrating sting reverberates throughout my spine. The wave of pain washes and rushes throughout my shaking body. My knees are weak…

Sweat forming on my wrinkled forehead, I wonder what the next blow will be like.

Crack...the second strike sends bolts of shock riveting through to my toes. Wincing in excruciating pain, I can't believe the savagery I'm witnessing. The palm of my hand is stinging as my head swims. I can't believe it…the brutal savagery of it all…he's possessed of an evil spirit.

Crack...my hand is numb…I can't hold myself any longer as tears flow freely down the length of my wet-soaked cheeks. I look on in submission as my poor naked hand is abused for an eternity…

Trying to compose myself before entering the class full of friends but to no avail. My friends peer at me curiously and I'm sure they see my teary eyes. The heat of shame competes with that of my burning hands. Sitting at

my desk, I place my trembling, stinging hands on the cool metal under my desk and let it soothes the heat emanating from my palms...

…What horrific memories assail today. Things, people and this place trigger me into flashbacks of which I've no control. These visit without invitation and torment me without respite. Surely no amount of brutal savagery can surpass this mental anguish.

Chapter 7 / Roger Dodger
(Flashback - Elementary School - 1969)

These violent and sordid imaginations. Why do they confront me when I least expect it? Why am I spiraling into deep psychosis? What has rendered me so insane? Time…so much time with nothing to do. The mind has its limits…strong, but subject to whim. Interacting with reality, it goes off on its own to exact revenge. Detaching…divorcing myself from this mindless, tortuous milieu.

Why should I want to stay here? It's natural to want to wander off. There's no sensory stimuli to fire up my rational mind. This is a nightmare and I take promenades into dreams…but awful…so damned awful. I can almost taste the blood and guts. How can I ever reverse this damage?

I can stop, look and listen to my immediate surroundings but I see and hear nothing. Bland colored walls, insane puppet masters, psychos and a mentality befitting henchmen. Barbarians. Absolute madmen. A small concrete cubicle with steel bed, toilet and sink. No books, no music…the smells…rotten, putrid…nauseating shit-house.

Perhaps in sleep I can escape this world of chaos, mayhem and violence.

All right then, how the hell am I going to sleep with these damned cuffs? I've done this a million times before. Pulling part of my black striped mattress up on the wall, I've made myself an instant pillow. Leaving the other end on my cot, I stretch my weary body sideways and close my eyes. Now sleep Ritchy…just drift big guy…the beautiful wonder of escape in the dream world will come upon me. No crickets, no noise. Feeling myself slipping into this blissful state…my only respite…

(1969)

…Roger, with big brown round eyes sparkling in excitement, strides innocently inside my metal cabinet with blind loyalty. What an idiot. Roger Dodger barely tops four feet six inches in height. Perfect fit. He looks a little cramped in my school locker but so would I. I'm a tiny tyke myself.

Looking at me curiously, he's unsure of what's happening now. Is he having second thoughts? I better act swiftly lest he chicken out. So, smiling broadly, I slowly close the blue metal door of my locker and very deftly secure the combination lock.

Roger begins to protest mildly but I urge him in a hushed tone to keep silent as teachers pass by. Duped, my captive remaining quiet, I slide surreptitiously into the classroom. Seated comfortably behind my desk in class, I wait for the teacher to begin her lesson. See ya later Roger Dodger.

Sitting smugly in class, the teacher is interrupted by light muffled sounds that seem to be coming from outside. They're barely audible. I'm getting a visual of little Roger as panic creeps in his anxious chest. I want to burst out laughing but I must contain myself. The sound ceases just as the teacher looks curiously around the classroom. With a look of faint amusement she shakes her head and resumes her lesson.

Struggling to suppress the burst of laughter swelling inside, I bow my head on my desk to conceal my grimacing features and teary eyes. Shoulders shaking, my stomach tightens as tides of heartfelt merriment swirl like tempestuous tidal waves.

A few more minutes elapse before the mysterious muffled sounds return. Roger has decided to add light knocks this time. My prisoner is becoming worried. Oh well…too late to do anything now…I can't just get up and confess…I'd be killed.

The teacher starts, ceases her lesson, and looking curiously around the packed classroom, asks if we hear what she's hearing. I'm going to burst at the seams for certain now. The teacher has this stupid look pasted on her face. Little Roger has been in my locker for two, three minutes?

Before anyone responds, hysterical and ear piercing cries of panic coupled with reverberating sounds of crashing metal are heard throughout the entire school. Little Roger is freaking. His blaring pitch, it's alarming.

Stiffening with fear, the teacher tosses her chalk on the floor and runs out of the classroom followed by legions of terror-stricken students. Following close behind my panicked peers, we collide into teachers and students from adjacent classrooms. A mask of fear grips their faces. There's panic and chaos in the school. Quiet Roger; try to keep quiet for God sakes.

Oh no, the freaking principal is rushing headlong from his office, speeding across the long narrow corridor with concern written large on his worried countenance. Dear God, looking around at the chaos and havoc I created, I'm becoming more than a little concerned myself. I turn nervously to look at my best friend Robert whose face has turned a tinge of white…

…Woah…my heart is beating like ninety. What the hell is going on? That fat ugly diddler in the next cell interrupts my sleep again. He's screaming blue murder. What the hell is his problem? Wait until he tries to sleep. I know when he goes under as he snores like a jackhammer. The fanatical screws are ignoring him. His voice shrieks and the pitch is frightening. I swear someone is killing him. Is he dreaming about his past also…?

Hmmm…I wonder why none of my old friends ever write or visit me. I mean, not even a card. Nothing. Do they think I'm so rotten, so corrupt, so base and vile? We go back many years and traveled through elementary and secondary school together, but they don't even acknowledge my life. I'm alive…breathing, thinking…feeling.

I wonder how they're doing? Married with kids? University? Good jobs? They have to be doing better than I. Perhaps they think they're better than I am?

I guess friendships are nothing more than transient bonds. Nothing more than an illusion. These idiots don't have any class, no thoughts except for themselves. They're lucky they don't ever come here because I would let them protect themselves with their limited devices. They'd be hurt. They'd never make it two minutes in here.

I miss them…I should've never abandoned them in the first place when other friends came along. They feel betrayed. I know that feeling now…

People forget. Even my uncle never returned my letter…not a peep. He must view me as some animal. Everyone does. I'm human…they think I'm inherently bad…I believe them…I must be…why else would I be here?

Chapter 8 / Boxer Boy
(Flashback - Teenager - 1973)

The fat 300-pound diddler who's molested little girls finally mellows out. I'm not sure if he was experiencing a nightmare or was just releasing his murderous fury from his present real life nightmare. In any case, he's quiet for now.

I'm thirsty as hell and wish I could take a drink of water, but I won't ask the man for any favors. I would rather die than ask these demons for anything. A man can survive for three to four days without water anyway. Further, I see there's water in my toilet, so if things get too bad, I'll slurp some up. I feel like a wild beast and crazed animal as it is. It doesn't taste very foul. It refreshes me and confirms my status as a beast.

I was born in the wrong time zone. I'm out of place and should have been born some other time. A time when humanity was better evolved. More mentally and emotionally mature with increased awareness…more damn humane.

I'm awake now so what am I going to do for the next few hours? What time is it? Is it day or night? The place is quiet so it must be…I've no clue. What does it matter anyway. Time is time is time and I'll be out in a few days and carry out my plan. Yes…the beautiful plan…I'll do it…

…Welcome to my nightmare you sons-of-a bitches. That fat porky huddled in the corner looks famished and weakened...what experiment should I conduct with you today? You seem to have lost a good fifty pounds. Talk about a great weight loss program. Would you recommend me to your friends? Tell me where your best friend lives, or I kill the bitch right now.

He's horrified and defeated. I'm serious, I want to know where your best friend lives and I want to know right now. Address, telephone, and vital statistics like if they have kids and if he has a wife. Don't pretend to be moral and just asshole. You want to play the hero? False bravado is always met with death. The foolish martyr...

…These fantasies, they're becoming increasingly vivid and plentiful. I've too much dead time and not enough to do in this hole. No books, no radio, no nothing. When did I cross the line from fantasy to reality? When did I decide to do this for real? I know I'm nuts and know I'll kill every one of these coppers. Nobody can blame me for that, can they? I'm prepared to die for this noble cause. I was a pretty good kid once, but now my purity and innocence has been raped and torn apart. I can't trace the exact time when my mind crossed over that fine line. Am I insane? I must be. Some people would think so, but they haven't experienced this hellish dimension.

It's very hard to understand. But who wouldn't want to kill, murder and mutilate after being subjected to such a brutal regime for so many years? I've heard of University preps who have simulated lock up situations. These otherwise good kids ended up hating their peers who played the role of screws. Even though their period of lock up was only a few hours, the students nonetheless spiraled into the dimensions of hatred. Can they imagine and empathize with seven long years under conditions best described as nightmarish?

These kids were not even close to the real article. The simulation lacked ingredients of reality. The screws were not this brutal and the cons were not this crazy were they? I don't think so. Hypothetical situations can't compare to the genuine article. I don't think they beat each other, spit and piss at one another, chained and shackled each other. I can't see them burning one another with Mace and slamming one another with powerful fire hoses. The experiment was shallow. Yet they felt themselves spiraling.

What about serving four hundred days in the hole? This didn't help my psyche. What about the vicious mentality around here? It's kill or be killed. The bluffs turn into the genuine article after awhile. When, and at what precise moment this occurs, is still a mystery to me. Over any period, my condition deteriorates. Imperceptibly, slowly over time, I'm cast and pushed over the edge. It's natural. Anybody would lose it man. There's no escape and no respite from the constant torment. Nobody is doing anything about it either.

I was a good kid once. I had everything going for me. I had a host of great friends and lots of fun pursuing my dreams. How many thirteen-year olds have a dream? I had it together for a long time. I was dedicated and worked hard…

(1973)

> …Twenty-one months into boxing training and I'm in peak performance shape, fighting endlessly without tiring. My bout with the Canadian champion is set for next week and I have no doubt I'll be victorious.
>
> I train many hours on my own away from the club. I sleep and eat with this championship in mind. I wake with the matter on my mind and fall asleep with visuals of success. This is one step closer to my dream of becoming an Olympian.
>
> One day, dissension breaks out at the club. It appears the putrid smell of jealousy and envy is leaving its stench in our small clubroom. My peers are questioning why I, the junior guy, am facing the champ. Noting that some of the more experienced fighters from our club fought the champ and failed, why should I be given the chance? They figure I'm not as experienced and they want a rematch first.
>
> The sour grapes have forgotten that it's I who went to Toronto and I who defeated opponents who decisively beat these so-called more experienced fighters in our club. Aside from their short memories, I feel hurt and betrayed by their rumblings and wonder where the team spirit has gone. Thankfully not all the fighters in the club think the same but the feelings are strong enough to leave their mark on my mind's eye.
>
> One fateful night upon leaving the club, the rumbling turns into clear chatter. The primary source becomes very evident as I sit in my neighbors' car waiting for the drive back home. One of these neighbors lost to the champ a few months prior. This boy is my senior of two years and has trained at the club a few months before my arrival. He believes I could never beat the Champ because he lost to him. This crybaby estimates he's a far better fighter than I.
>
> I try to pacify the big suck by assuring him I don't consider myself superior, but believe I could defeat the champ on the strength of my style. My assurances do little to quell the big baby's whining and are insufficient to deflect his mounting desire to fight.

Seated in the back seat of his father's car with his little brother and Little Roger, the big baby barks at me from the front seat. As the bickering and taunting persists, I begin to wonder when his father will emerge from the club. I know where all this is going and I don't appreciate the tense atmosphere that's escalating.

The little brother is now siding with him, and I find myself in the middle of a barrage of insults, put-downs and provocation. Grimacing faces, pouting mouths, gnarled features and knotted eyebrows surround me. I feel closed in. I'm getting nervous and pumped.

In the heat of the moment, the big brother throws the first blow. Twisting his awkward body, knees hugged against the back of his seat, he lets go of a solid right hand. The blow brushes against my dodging head. Head still ducked, I sense the younger brother begin to shift his weight to deliver his own punches.

Swinging my right arm behind the younger one, I fling him to the floor where he lands stuck and cramped between the back and front seat. Sliding off the back seat, I sit atop his crumpled body and rain punches into his surprised face. The kid is panicked and tries to raise his hands in front of his face. I land five to seven blows to his face and head as blood spews everywhere. The older brother is hammering away at the back of my head but his blows have little effect. I'm just so pumped.

The little brother done and finished, I swing around and give the older of the boys some attention in return. Grabbing a handful of his reddish hair with one hand, I pull on his plaid shirt with the other. Pulling him over the seat, he joins his bleeding brother caught between the seats. The four of us are packed in the back seat as I swing in every direction.

Their freckled faces are splattered with blood and I can't fathom what are freckles and what's blood. It's getting very messy and cramped in here.

Squeezing myself out of the back door of the little ford car, I make it a few steps out before the older boy jumps me. Turning and twisting on the mud soaked ground, his father emerges from the club with a reverberating bellow.

That scuffle cost me everything I trained so hard for in the two preceding years. My chance to meet the Canadian champion and to head for the Olympics vanishes on this dreadful day at this very moment. My whole source of motivation is yanked out of my hands and I'm left holding thin air. What a technical knock out…

…Talk about a king knock out. I'm going to knock you out and take you down for keeps. That's how we do things here in the Haven. I only have a few days to go asshole. I may be cuffed right now but I have a set of cuffs for you. Cuffs at the side of the head jerk off…

...Files strewn across the desk, my prisoner is gagged and tied. The parole representative has some paper work on Willy. Look at what they have inscribed within. No wonder we always get labeled and stereotyped. Self-proclaimed shrinks…they have no idea what they're talking about…the joint has no part in this chaos? Look at your selves…self-defeating patterns…volatile personality…multiple personality disorder…everyone has a dual personality. Look, you're a two

face. Your actions belie the morals you seek to instill and impart…you can't transmit what you lack…you're not a role model.

Show us something different from what we already know. His white shirt partially unbuttoned reveal war tattoos…he may be a veteran of the second world war…how do you like the third?

Chapter 9 / Karate Kid
(Flashback - Teenager - 1974)

The crickets. Oh no, not those annoying mind breaking crickets again. It must be late evening. I can't take another night of this torture. I'm going to snap for certain. QUIET. They won't stop. They echo in my vent for hours and never stop. The hollow sound of my dungeon is like acoustics for their disjointed orchestra. GAAAD, I hate this hellhole.

The sounds are like crashing cymbals now. How long will they go on tonight? I'll have to get busy in a bid to avoid going crazy. I will stir up some shit and get the administration to act on this bullshit. What am I going to do? I'm yet cuffed but I have use of my feet. I know…I can kill two birds with one stone. I'll lie on my back and kick my steel cell door until the coppers come and fight with me. We will get it on and that fat diddler in the next cell will be made to hear my sounds of music. The night shift is not going to get any rest tonight either. I'll drive them nuts along with me.

KABOOM…the first blow sends a shattering, ear popping crash reverberating throughout the putrid bowels of the hole. I'm certain the guys in segregation next door can hear me. Must hit harder and let the guys in the heart of this hellhole hear my fury.

KABOOM…this blow echoes loudly and chases the first down the narrow labyrinth of this hellish hole. My mind is shut and I'm only focussed on my footing. No shackles this time and the motion is great.

I bang endlessly and feel the tempo picking up. I close my eyes and let my feet slam into the cold hard steel of my door. The numbness is coming. Good…KABOOM…KABOOM…

Holy mackerel. Look at what just peered in my cell. It's the stupid screw with the blue eyes and crooked nose. What's the matter asshole? Can't sleep and earn your twenty dollars an hour sitting on your fat ass at my expense? Let me give you something to work for. Come in my cave and try to stop me asshole.

The bastard has a sneer on his face. The mindless madman…this is nothing…wait till he visits my prison. He'll bang and bang and bang but I'll kick his face in…

(1974)

> …In phase two of my training, Big Bill decides the time is ripe for me to experience another dimension of the fight game. Theory is over and practical is to begin. Big Bill selects a rock 'n roll tavern on the outskirts of town as our experimental field. I'm only fifteen years old, five foot four and weigh one hundred and twenty pounds. That doesn't deter Big Bill. Who, after all, is going to challenge HIM to see my identification at the door? The guy is five foot ten, weighs two hundred and twenty pounds, has muscles from head to foot, and if punked off, hits like a ton of lead.
>
> Jumping into his customized van, Big Bill and I drive the five miles out of town and arrive at the preferred destination. The drive has been unusually quiet as we pull into the large parking lot packed with cars and trucks.

Stepping out of his light blue van, we're welcomed with the sounds of heavy metal flowing through the crisp night air.

Sauntering nervously beside Big Bill into the bar, the overpowering smell of stale draft ale and cigarette smoke cling to my clothing. I'm feeling very anxious as I follow Big Bill to the pool table area where the cigarette smoke projects a pall blue mist around the boisterous patrons. Sitting at a small wooden table, I'm overwhelmed by the beehive of activity and assaulted by loud music.

A waitress with super-tight fitting blue denim jeans and scanty pink halter top takes Bill's order and brings back two extra tall bottles of beer. Leaning over our table, she's unaware that her breasts are inches from spilling out of her top. Blond hair tied behind her sunken features, the blue mascara gives her the appearance of a little harlot.

Scanning the intimidating stature of Big Bill, his shoulders burst the seams of his short sleeved tank top. Despite this security, I can't get comfortable in this strange milieu. Going to the bar is not something I've ever done before. The scene is foreign. People seem so disjointed… disoriented and unaware.

Big Bill, sipping his beer, tells me to observe my environment in his high pitch tone. I can barely hear what he's saying above the heavy metal music blasting from oversized speakers. He wants me to make mental notes of several people and their habits. I'm asked to monitor the liquor flow of about ten drinkers in my direct vicinity and observe their temperaments. I have to know if they smoke and what brand, how many beers they're drinking and if they drink from glasses. Are their ashtrays full, color of their pants, their company, who they talk to, their language and ad infinitum.

Leaning closer toward me, Big Bill makes me aware of the three exits in our view and states smartly that we should always keep our backs to the wall.

I'm very aware of the three bushmen seated beside our table who are not only drinking their tall bottles of beer like they're ginger ale, but who are also being humiliated at the pool table. My heavy set bearded neighbor is so close to me I could feel the heat of his shoulder on mine. Big Bill doesn't have to suggest keeping an eye on these monsters. They look like they just came out of the woods for God sake. They're big monsters, bigger than Bill himself. The profanity spewing forth from their mouths is shocking.

Scanning the many faces in my new milieu, some drinking, others smoking what appears to be pot, I feel the uneasiness stirring in the pit of my stomach. I note some of the prettiest women drink just as much as the big bushmen.

As the night progresses and my homework persists, Bill leans over the table, and whispering in my ear, tells me to pay closer attention to my neighbor's bottle of beer. What?

I'm getting nervous and scared now. What could this mean? What the hell is happening here? What kind of place is this? I can't imagine anyone

wanting to hit a kid like me in the face with an oversized bottle of beer. Nobody is that crazy are they? I haven't done anything or said a word to anyone.

My thinking is cut short, when suddenly, my neighbor's bottle swiftly leaves his table. I'm shocked. Fear grips my stomach as I instinctively duck as quickly as I can. Hands above my head, my face hugs my knees. My heart is racing; I'm paralyzed by fright.

Hunched over with my cheeks to my knees, I see Big Bill's feet scurry quickly across my vision and stop directly in front of my bottle-swinging neighbor. That's extremely fast.

As shards of broken glass bounce off the wall and fly in every direction, the sobering thought hits that this guy almost disfigured me for life.

I can feel the liquor pour down my back as Big Bill delivers a vicious front kick under the idiot's hairy chin. The impact sends the guy's head slamming into the wall. The sot falls headlong at Bill's feet, face against the hardwood floor with eyes sealed tight. Terror, shock and fear seize me from head to toe.

Straightening myself, I press my back against the wall and feel the wet liquor soak my Van Halen tee shirt. I don't dare get in the way, lest I get hit accidentally by one of Big Bill's powerful blows.

Before the next assailant could jump from his seat, Big Bill delivers a lightning-quick right cross to his blond bearded chin. Smashing into his gaping mouth, blood splashes across the air and sprays to neighboring tables. That snapping blow sends the bushman reeling to the floor to meet his sleeping partner. I'm sure his jaw is shattered.

The two behemoths are knocked out cold. I've never seen anybody knocked out. Everything is moving in fast time. This is scaring the shit out of me. Maybe these guys are dead or crippled. My heart is beating madly and I wonder what will happen next.

Assailant number three, who has his back to Big Bill, is semi turned in his seat. This burly fellow grimaces and snarls as he takes a grip upon Big Bill's shirt and tries to pull himself up. Powerfully, Big Bill shoots his hand out and palms this guy so hard and fast, I doubt he knows what hit him. Blood splatters all over his face as he buckles loosely to the floor to meet his friends. His nose must be pushed to his brain. Is he dead…?

…A crossed-eyed looking screw comes to my cell door and has company. Are they going to entertain me again? The food slot creaks open and I see the end of the Mace gun.

What's the matter with these coppers? They don't like my banging or what? They should not have thrown me in the hole in the first place. What business is it of theirs how I survive in here? I had to pummel that kid because he would have got me killed by virtue of ignoring the prison codes. I never hurt him that bad. He can go on living his pitiful life.

Chapter 10 / "High" School Daze
(Flashback - Stoner/Fighter - 1975)

A thin stream of liquid spits out from my food slot and splatters against my worn blue prison garb. Turning my face away quickly, I'm too late. The thin spray splashes in my face just below my hairy chin and trickles down my chest. The burning flame will start soon; I have a few seconds before it lights up like fire and burns layers of skin off my body.

The door of my empty cavern opens wide with sounds of heavy boots echoing off my dull walls…this fat copper…the bulging jowls…short cropped hair…sleaze bag…he reminds me of my high school principal…

(1975)

…The obese principal with thick black mane and wide shoulders becomes a hapless target for one of Dan's paperclips. Whizzing through the air at incredible speed, the clip smacks the two hundred and fifty pound mammoth in the center of his massive back. Seated behind me in class, Dan chokes back laughter after his expert shot. Stoned, after smoking my joint during lunch break, I bow my head on my desk and chuckle silently…

A few seconds elapse before I sense the principal looming beside me. Head crooked in the fold of my elbow, I look down to my left slightly and see his polished size thirteen shoes at my side. UH, Oh…

Suddenly, a hard blow slams at the base of my skull causing my nose to crash violently in my desk. The impact is vicious as tears begin to swell in my hazy eyes. I see red…

Lifting my head slowly, I shake my befogged brain while wiping the stream of tears from my eyes. Everything is hazy and distanced. I can't see a damned thing. The back of my head is throbbing for God sakes. What kind of animal is this?

My hand scans the smooth cool surface of my desk, searching madly for pens and pencils. The tears have left a wet pool on my desk. Could it be blood? Pumped, my fingers probe the front of my desk and seizing a handful of writing instruments, I stand face to face with the madman.

The classroom is a cemetery. Everyone is shocked and silenced. I can't see anything or hear a word. All I want to do is drive a handful of instruments into his protruding belly. My mind racing, my hands tighten on my weapons. I imagine piercing his bulging guts under his crisp white shirt. Lead poisoning for you, you big piece of shit.

Wiping the last of the tears from my cloudy eyes, I burn my eyes into his and tell him to go fuck himself. I want him to respond and react. Anything will do. Any provocation will cause his guts to be filled with lead and ink. The fat bastard says nothing. He just stands in front of me speechless.

Visualizing my attack plan for the last time, I consider kicking him in the bag. He'd double over and I would drive my pointed weapons in his slumped back.

Incensed, I throw my writing instruments on the floor, call him a big pig and storm out of the classroom…

…Lying on my back, I struggle to get to my feet. I'm in a terrible position. Before I can make it up, the whole battery crashes heavily atop my sprawled body. Knees slam into my stomach and chest and mangled arms seize every opening they could. Arms twisting, legs seized, one screw has his shoe on my hair. I'm caught, immobile. It's like fighting an octopus. Tentacles sucking at me…trying to take my blood and spirit.

What? Is this goon with thin lips and scar on his cheek going to punch me? He looks intent and very pissed off. Those black curly locks…that dark complexion of his…

(1975)

…It's a cold winter afternoon when Big Bill and I stride to the gym area for a look around. Entering the gym, still cold from our jaunt in snow covered sidewalks, Bill and I take note of Mark standing innocently by the trampoline watching Linda perform her routine.

Mark's black curly locks and olive complexion gives him the look of a Mediterranean. With thick muscular legs and bulging arms, the fellow has the build of an acrobat and gymnast.

The gym is busy considering it's slightly noon. A few of the regular guys are shooting hoops at the back while others are milling around killing time until the bell rings.

My attention is drawn back to Mark and Linda. Mark is encouraging her to perform her trampoline routine. The sucker is smiling broadly and Linda is delighted with the attention. Jumping at great heights, Linda's supple long black curly hair falls lightly over her beautiful features as her blue eyes sparkle with enthusiasm.

My heart leaps. She always looks so terrific in her jump suit and today is no exception. My little Linda is built like Wonderwoman and is so sweet and innocent. She's twirling and turning like a real pro. I could envision her in the Olympics.

Big Bill never misses a beat. He's quick to stir the feeling of jealousy twisting in my bosom. Seeing my face turn a tinge of red, Big Bill begins telling me that Mark is disrespectful and lustful. Continuing with his instigating tactics, Big Bill has me going nuts in no time. With Big Bill encouraging me, I stride over to Mark.

The urge to hit Mark is overpowering. My muscles tense up and my mind visualizes my attack. Oblivious, Mark has his arms and hands resting on the steel blue railing of the trampoline. His body hunched forward, he continues to pump Linda up. He's captivated and engrossed by my little sweetie and her perfect performance. I'm becoming more jealous with every passing moment. I must get his stupid attention away from Linda somehow.

Without another thought, I grab a thick handful of his black tuff behind his head and powerfully slam his forehead into the side steel railing of the trampoline.

The force and sound of the blow stops Linda abruptly as she stands in shock and terror…

…The monstrosity gets up and leaves my cell as the others slip my cuffs off and retreat out of my dungeon. Watching the goon squad slink out of my hole, the unshakable thought strikes me that this whole ordeal is nothing but one big stupid game. All they want to do is use me as their test subject. They want to provoke and antagonize me in order to practice their tactics and beat the boredom.

Holy shit, the sting from the Mace gun is starting to burn. I swear blisters are going to bubble on my chest and neck. My skin, it's beet red…this is intolerable.

Hunched over my toilet bowl, I cup my hands, and scooping up the cool water, splash it on my burning body. It has very little benefit.

The damned toilet water stinks. I need warm water but I have none in here. My sink is disabled because I banged my feet. This thing is not over. The Mace is penetrating my pores…it's running through me like fire…my nasal passages are burning and my eyes are blinded.

Lying flat on my stomach on the cool cement floor…this might help…it's not…the searing heat is bubbling within me…unbearable…

Chapter 11 / Crossing Over
(Flashback - Stoner/Fighter - 1976)

The searing heat of Mace has subsided but the sting remained a long time. I just lied on the cold concrete floor until shivers swallowed me whole. What a feeling that was; I thought permanent damage would result, but I don't feel any scarring on my skin. Why did they have to Mace me anyway? I was only banging my feet on the door. The asses like to hurt people. They're vindictive and hurtful bastards. They hate me. That screw with buckteeth like Bugs Bunny and cross-eyes didn't have the jam to hit me. He couldn't hurt me anyway. But if I let him have one of mine…he'd fall and break like a papier-mâché doll…

Let them play their stupid head games; I'll be out very soon anyway. For now, I better get myself in tip-top shape before I take them out and erase their ilk from the face of the earth.

Stretch big fella', stretch those hams. Straining…blood rushing to my head…have to touch my forehead to my knees while keeping straight legged. Come on…I use to be able to place my head to my knees while standing…almost there…close…good, there it is.

All right now, hit the floor and one, two, three, four…thirty…forty…fifty…straining…sixty…up…it's burning…sixty-five…go for seventy kid…alright. Not bad; I can still crank off seventy clean and full push-ups. Wow, the chest is pumped big time. Flexing, I recall how I could place a cup of coffee on my pectorals while sitting. Slabs of muscle fold over my chest like beefsteaks. Gotta loosen up before the bozos come back for another round of their mindless games.

OK, throw a few combinations. Snapping left jab to the nose, tears flowing, blinding my opponent. Duck quickly and smash the right-cross to the ribs and he doubles over. Straightening

myself, I finish him off with a solid left hook to the jaw. That combo knocked out a few jerks in my day. Maybe I can kill someone if I smash them in the temple. Maybe drive the bridge of their nose into the brain. I took out a few threatening characters with this deadly combo. They flew across the floor and slammed helplessly into furniture and walls.

I'm loosening up very nicely now. Nice and limber with a good snap at the end. I must never go down and never go unconscious, no matter what happens or how bad I'm hurt. These guys can and do kill. You never know what they'll do once they have you down. They may not stop. They're blood thirsting psychos. At least I'll give them an opportunity to speak once I knock them down.

They found one con beheaded before. His head was found in his toilet bowl. What had he done to deserve that? I won't let that happen to me. No way. I'll fight like a cornered tiger. Hit as fast as lightning and as hard as a mule. That's the way to go now. Lou and I use to fight but nothing like in here. Street fights and joint fights are not at all the same. My good ol' buddy Lou, they were pretty wild and crazy days…

(1976)

> …Fighting, drinking, drugging, womanizing, driving around day and night, delivering drugs and hitting the local hotels is the norm for us. We drive around in Lou's supped-up ford pick-up truck with all the trimmings. The side pipes bellowing, my head popped-out of the sunroof with the powerful engine roaring, we squeal the Mag tires around every corner in town. Picking up our dope supply, we guzzle a few bottles of gin and travel to parties all over town to sell our lots of acid, grams of hash, oil and pot.
>
> I smoke and drink uncontrollably for two years with Lou. They say a man is apportioned forty gallons of liquor in his lifetime and I consume that amount in less than twenty-four months. Somehow, I don't think this is unusual for a teenager aged fifteen.
>
> Life for Lou and I is one big drunk. The parties we attend verge on insanity. Cases upon cases of beer fill the refrigerators and porches while people sneak madly about trying to stash their liquor supply for the morning after. Many mornings did the hangover soul find his stashes raided and empty.
>
> The fights are brutal and happen at the slightest provocation. How many sots did I hammer to the ground? Twenty, thirty, forty?
>
> I love to test a person's conviction and might. They like to strut their arrogant airs and play bravado before their drunken harlots. They never hurt me or given me anything close to a good fight.
>
> I hit and speak later. I've seen what sucker punches can do and know from experience the first blow increases the chance of victory tenfold. I always hit first.
>
> Three, four and even five grown men have fallen in one fight. I can take a good walloping and deliver some good ones in return…

…One seventy-five, seventy-six, seventy-seven. Come on kid, you can do a least two hundred more. Five hundred sit-ups a day is not that much. The gut is rippled and nobody can hit hard enough to double me over. Big Mike can stand on the bench press, hold a medicine ball high over his head and slam it on my stomach and I don't even flinch. That stunned onlookers in the gym.

I've worked up a pretty good sweat now. Four hundred push-ups, five hundred sit-ups, countless leg raises, seven to eight rounds of kick boxing, excellent stretches, free standing squats and what else did I do? It doesn't matter.

Let me see. Can I remember some of my words? Vacuous, vapid, perspicacity, percipience, acumen, shibboleth, vitriolic, eschew, obfuscation, diatribe, sentinel, maudlin, apex, epitome, vex, stentorian. I've added three thousand words to my vocabulary. God knows I've studied many vocabulary-building books.

Shakespeare had seventy thousand words in his vast repertoire, aha, there's another good word. I wrote some damn good grievances while in here. The administration was stumped on the first paragraph. Stupid and ignorant ilk.

I was always good with words at school. Pretty good athlete and proficient with the English language. It's served me well. Was it all preparation work? WOW…I wonder if fate and destiny had this in mind all along? Both my fighting skills and word power have come in handy around here. The words for the screws and the fists for the cons…

(1976)

…I've great potential and enjoy school wrestling. Unfortunately, the favored upcoming champ gets jealous. I can never seem to escape the putrid face of jealousy. The aura surrounds me and sickens me.

The matter comes to a head, when on a sunny summer's day waiting for the bus that will take me home from high school, the gorilla makes his famous appearance with a few of his pugnacious friends.

Long blond curls tied loosely at the back of his big head, the gorilla with chest pumped up and muscular arms swaying at his sides, stops in front of me, and sneering, asks if I think I'm tough.

His faded blue denim jeans torn at the knees, his blue and red plaid shirt is partially unbuttoned to reveal carved muscular pectorals. This well sculpted specimen is obviously very strong and looks like a seasoned street fighter. His high cheekbones and clear blue eyes remind me of the Russian fighter I've seen on Bruce Lee's Fist of Fury. He has to weigh at least 150 pounds against my 120.

Maybe, just maybe I've met my match, but what have I done to deserve his attention?

Smiling easily, I peer calmly into his anxious blue eyes and ask curiously why he thinks I think I'm so tough? I'm being sarcastic and amusing him with my psyche out game. Although nervous inside, I'm quite calm and confident on the outside. I know the tricks of the trade very well as I've fought several times, both in and out of the ring. The trick is to keep calm and let my opponent lose his focus. Always have to be in control of those dreadful emotions.

With gnarled features and twisted mouth, he approaches within foot striking distance. As he shuffles nearer, his friends begin to chant and encourage him to beat the living daylights out of me.

I feel the crowd beginning to spread and form the famous human circle that'll become our dual-den.

As always in these situations, the crowd vanishes from my mind's eye and everything becomes death-like silent. All my senses are piqued and

super sensitive. I can even smell his cheap after-shave and medicinal deodorant.

His eyes, they're so eager, and his body much too tense. His arrogant head thrown proudly back, he clenches his rock hard fists.

He makes the cardinal mistake. Telegraphing is a sign of an inexperienced fighter and this guy can be read for miles. Shifting his weight back for a moment, the gorilla lunges forward in a desperate bid to place me in a vice-like headlock. His arms swishing air, I instinctively duck and wrapping my arm around his waist, lift him slightly off his feet and turning quickly, slam him to the ground with tremendous force.

The startled beast crashes back first on the hard pavement with a loud bellow. Keeping my arm around his waist, I roll on the ground unto his heaving chest.

Without hesitation, I grab a handful of his golden locks and pin his arms to his sides between my knees. The goon is flat on his back. Sitting right atop his chest, my left arm is cocked and raised above my head. All in less than five seconds.

Sitting comfortably atop his stretched body, I look intently into his surprised face. The gorilla looks up at me with such a stupid look on his face I almost feel sorry for the idiot.

I want to slam my fist in his contorted face but am afraid of what I'll do to it. What if I break his cheekbone or shatter his pearly white teeth? He didn't even hurt me and I'm not angry. Give me a reason to get pumped and you'll have to deal with my undying wrath then.

Releasing my grip, I stand and pace away to give him a choice to either back out of this fight or spark it up again.

Standing and shaking the dirt from his crumpled clothes, I watch the gorilla walk away with a look of shame on his big face. Nearing his friends, they appear to be very jittery and disappointed with his effort. Amidst the chatter in their crowd, I overhear my foe saying I'm lucky and that it's not over. That statement hits me hard.

The long yellow bus rolls to a stop and we spill onboard. Grabbing a seat at the back of the bus, I position my back to the window as the gorilla and his friends follow close behind.

Seated comfortably, still a little jittery from the fight, I see my tenacious opponent approaching. His eyes hooded in anger, his face is taut with frustration. Curling his upper lip, the idiot starts provoking me again. Standing in front of me, with his entourage encouraging him to redeem his honor, he's telling me he's going to get off at my stop and show me how to finish a fight for good. Sneering and tensing his large biceps, I begin to sense real and imminent danger. Butterflies start to dance in my stomach as I wonder what he plans to do. I've no desire to have my nose broken or eyes blackened. Did I make a mistake letting him get up?

Hovering menacingly in front of me with his fists clenched, I decide to capitalize on the element of surprise. Quickly jumping to a crouched

position, I grab hold of the overhead steel bar with both hands and let the bottoms of my feet slam with all my force into his muscular chest.

He reacts too late. Face contorted and shocked, his flailing forearms cutting through the wind, his body is pushed violently backward from the crushing blow. Both his feet leave the ground as his body is hurled through the air. The gorilla crashes heavily into the steel slatted seats several rows up. Shuffling hurriedly toward him, pushing bodies out of my way, I peer down at his slumped and cramped body. This gorilla is not getting up and trying anything more and of that I'm certain…

…Not again. My food slot opens wide and the copper wants me to read something. What the hell are they up to now? The thin screw with the crooked eyes has a smirk on his face and I know this is just another stupid head game.

Unfolding a legal size sheet of paper, I discover that the stupid warden has me on a strict sandwich and water diet because I've thrown my food and hot coffee at the walls and the screws earlier. To add insult to injury, the jerk wants me to write him a letter requesting to be placed on regular meals.

Sure, get me some paper and a pencil and I'll write the jerk a letter. At least I'll be able to practice my writing skills. I'm going to have to write about this nightmare one day anyway.

Chapter 12
Crash Test Dummy

Watching the skinny screw walk away, I demand he bring me writing instruments like the good slave he is. "Make it fast, asshole. Make haste I say, make haste. Ha ha ha. Expedite our communication, asshole". What a bunch of idiots. Do they really think I'll write a letter to the stupid warden? Dummies. Maybe I'll compose such a powerful letter to the idiot, he'll need a professor to translate its content. He and his cronies are not that bright to begin with.

I can put my vocabulary building exercises into practice with these numbskulls. I'll show them who the "doorknob" is around here. They have no idea who they're playing with. I'm not some half-wit mental case wasting away in this hole. I'm a lot smarter than any of these bumbling fools.

This game is just another deliberate attempt to break me. Withholding proper nutrition is no way to recreate a soul. Child's play. This type of punishment, head game, power tripping, and control can never break me. My beliefs are beyond their psychological warfare.

Damn them, and all their stupid trips. My resolve to resist is strengthened by their efforts to break me. I'm resilient. To hell with them, my pure core remains untouched. Screw them and their Mickey Mouse head games.

The hole and strict diets are not hard to bear. Shit, it's not as if I haven't lived through worse. Like the time my old buddy Pete and I got all zoned out on booze and hash and "borrowed" a car . . .

Flashback--Joy Ride, 1976

Meeting this fateful day, Pistol Pete and I decide we'll skip school and head to his friend's home.

At five foot four, blond and blue eyed, Pete comes from what my school peers call snob hill, but with Pete and me these petty social distinctions mean little. We share a party hearty attitude. Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

Sauntering casually under the hot sun a few short blocks, we arrive at an apartment building I've been to many times before. In fact, I've performed chin-ups on the side railing of the eighth-floor balcony when stoned.

Travelling up the elevator a few floors, we stroll through the carpeted hallway, come to a dark wooden door, and without knocking, Pete and I step into the small apartment. A half dozen teenage boys are huddled closely together in a tiny dimly lit living room filled with smoke and the smell of pot. The smoke is so thick it drifts into the hallway as we open the door and spills its blue pall through the balcony door.

The teenagers, a few of whom I recognize by face and some by name, have pulled the sectional sofas and kitchen chairs into a circle in the living room and are passing each other huge cigar joints and large tumblers of drinks. Their stool- pigeon eyes give them away easily. It's obvious these guys are zoned out.

Anxiety twisting my innards, I pull my eyes away from this bizarre-looking picture. I glance to the other end of the apartment living room where my eyes rest on an overstocked bar overflowing with a wide array of bottles.

The sheer volume of booze shocks me. Rows of bottles are lined inside the small hutch and stand atop its smooth brown surface like turrets on a castle. I can't even begin to identify the many brands. There are tall slim-necked bottles, short fat jugs, dark and light colored drinks--the works. This is a party room, if I ever saw one. I've never seen this much booze in one room in my life. These guys have the rich parents and money to create a haven for the most wicked kinds of parties.

Uneasiness stirs in the pit of my gut as Pete motions me toward the center of the cramped living room. I slump on a plush sofa beside some guy who's by now completely boiled and fried. His eyes are flaming red. His brown curly hair is haggard and unkempt, yet his clothes have an expensive preppy-looking style. Something very wrong with this picture, I think to myself.

Without introductions, and without delay, four inflated joints are sparked in unison as if on cue at my arrival. The huge joints start going around the room as, simultaneously, large tumblers of whiskey, gin, and rye mixtures pass from hand to shaky hand.

A big fat joint comes in my direction and I hesitate. All eyes fall upon me. I'm very uncomfortable, as I'm beginning to think of this scene as some form of ritualistic suicide.

Sure, I've attended some pretty wicked parties in my day, but these guys are another brand of party warrior. Their immense buying power has enabled them to secure top-notch intoxicants in unprecedented amounts.

Their eyes remain fixed on me . . . I yield.

Picking up the jumbo joint from my numbed neighbor, I inhale its bitter taste, and as soon as I release it, another arrives. The liquor is being passed along in similar manner and I can't decide which to take and which to leave, so I do like everyone else and take both simultaneously. A joint in one hand and a drink in another, I inhale the thick blue smoke, hold it in my lungs, and

ingest a mouthful of whatever happens to be in my hand, before I exhale thick clouds of smoke.

The young prep seated next to me blows thick streams of smoke from the end of his joint into my lungs. The shotguns have a dizzying impact. Some of these inflated joints possess a combination of hash, grass, and oil. After about an hour of this madness, the rum, rye, vodka, and gin mixtures start tasting like fruit punch.

Within a very short period, I too am completely boiled, fried, cooked, and blitzed. I thought I was a party veteran, but I've never drunk and smoked this much before.

I vaguely recall leaving the apartment and have hazy recollections of kicking and breaking the front door lobby windows on my way out of the complex. The next thing I remember is standing in the warm hot sun, swaying dizzily at a curb a block away from Pete's home. I can barely walk and wonder what we're doing.

Numbed and disoriented, I see Pete's attention is focused on a group of people chatting on a front veranda of a sumptuous home. By all appearances, these people are friends bidding each other farewell. Looking closer, I realize Pete is not at all interested in the people but rather their brand new automobile. The shiny red Mustang is idling quietly, as the midday sun reflects off its tinted glass.

Turning swiftly toward me with a crazed and mischievous grimace on his drunken face, Pete suggests we take the vehicle for a ride. Swaying dizzily, I look into Pete's glossy eyes and laugh heartily. The guy has to be kidding. What a joker, I think to myself. But he doesn't seem to be kidding. Coaxing and cajoling, he tries to talk me into walking towards the car. What a guy.

I figure he'll back away once near the vehicle, so in order to entertain his fantasy and playfulness, I stagger along beside him toward the car. Wobbling with Pete toward the new vehicle, I stop and look at him. To my astonishment, he still looks serious. His eyes are so wild, I can't believe it's him. He has to be pulling my leg.

Standing hesitantly by the car, I pull my eyes away from him and look over at the people on the veranda one last time. Talking along merrily, they're not paying any attention to us.

At this point, Pete starts daring me to hop inside the driver's side. He's relentless--pumping me up and daring me. I decide at that very moment to take his prank farther. I'll turn the joke around on him and scare him a bit, but I'm certainly not going to steal the car. I'll go inside the car but that's as far as I'll go. That'll scare the shit out of him.

Resolved, I swing the car door open and slide carefully into the driver's seat. As the colorful images of the dash captivate my attention, I let my body sink comfortably into the great smelling leather seat.

The sounds of screaming people yank me out of my reverie. The people on the veranda have noticed us in their brand new wheels. They're gesturing frantically and the stout gray-haired fella is rushing headlong toward the vehicle like a rhino. Wow, I'm only kiddin' man.

Pete's yelling at me too, telling me to move out. My mind is racing. Everything's a haze. I can't believe I'm in the car. Neither Pete nor the people on the veranda are aware I've never driven before. Yet here I am, sitting in a brand new car, with unprecedented amounts of drugs and booze flowing through my veins, and people screaming blue murder in both directions. Am I going to drive?

Pete is frantic and yells at me louder as the people converge a few feet from the car. I slam my foot on the accelerator, the engine roars fiercely, but we remain motionless. I'm panicking.

Pete tells me to put the car in gear. I can't. I'm frozen in fright. The people are fast approaching the vehicle and the old fellow almost has his hand on the door handle. This is horrifying. Panic and confusion paralyze me.

Reaching over, Pete slams the column shift into gear. Suddenly, the car lurches forward violently as squealing tires send gravel flying in every direction. The car is out of control before we move ten feet.

Good God! I look through a blur and see a ninety-degree corner a few yards ahead closing in on us at incredible speed. I'm not going to make it and I know it. The damn car is running alone. This beast of a car is already travelling at speeds of over fifty miles per hour. Tires squealing, the car whirls and careens around the corner, swerving.

Holy shit, we're fishtailing! I'm scared people might be on the street. Can't stop. I'm confused and still looking through a blur. Everything is moving too fast. A cement hydro pole looms close. I freeze.

Shocked, I slam my foot on the accelerator. The pedal is to the metal--the car's speeding up, weaving and careening.

Crash!--the impact is vicious. My chest smashes into the steering wheel with such force I believe my sternum to be broken. There's not an ounce of breath left in my lungs, and my head crashes violently into the windshield, as my limp body reels backward like a lifeless mannequin in a trial crash. Crash test dummy, that's me.

Everything blurs. Is Pete exhorting me to run? His little hands tug on my tired arms, grabbing, pulling, but I'm not sure.

I think I hear him pleading with me to snap out of my daze and escape. His voice is distant and his words trail off. I can taste the blood on my lips. I want to sleep . . . don't care any more.

There's weight on my lead thighs. My legs are caught under the dash. I can't move them. Looking through a haze, I see what appears to be the engine resting above my knees. The engine is on my lap. Dear God, I almost cracked my knees and snapped my legs.

Can't straighten at all. My head's being pushed forward and I can't move. The roof of the car is pressed against my head. Peering through the shattered windshield, I see the hydro pole atop the car. I'm suffocating.

Cramped and stuck, the shattered glass from the windshield sticks to my arm and forehead like stucco. Brushing my face with a trembling hand, I pull away a handful of blood and glass.

Dizzy, confused, and semiconscious, I can't focus. My head is swimming and my heart palpitating. I'm going under . . . under . . .

I turned twenty-one in prison,
doing life without parole

Good ol' Merl. Sing that tune big fella. I prefer Kenny Rogers:

You got to know when to hold 'em,
know when to fold 'em,
know when to walk away,
know when to run.

You never count your money,
when you're sittin' at the table,
there'll be time enough for counting,
when the dealin's done.

Yahoooo! Sing them tunes . . . sing them rockin' tunes . . .

Chapter 13 / Dazed and Confused
(Flashback - Book ‘em Danno - 1976)

Time is time is time. In a bottle, in it’s natural passage. Time is immutable, relative. The clock signals nothing. I pass from moment to moment without fanfare. Without point of reference. Without any distinction. It all flows as it should…I pass through its element as a goblin…unheard, unseen by the masses. Kept away from harms way…rotting…melting in its alloy…swallowing me up whole. Time can’t kill me or rub me out. I’m the captain of my destiny.

What was John Howard thinking? The Quakers, real quacks. I feel no inner peace. No reconciling of my essence. No healing properties. Nothing but hatred and fury as my companions.

Penitence and punishment are irreconcilable. The two can never bring about the desired psychic change because one stultifies the other. This desensitizing regime strips man of all dignity and rapes him of all sensibilities. The psychotic killers roaming these halls evidence my point. The rate of recidivism begs for understanding and violent crimes plead to be answered. My own mental state speaks volumes of your barbaric practices and draconian propensities.

The mayhem goes on unabated in this hole. This enclosure is an enclave of your ever widening sphere of your murderous mentality. I feel myself spiraling. Powerless to arrest my decline into…into the dark abyss of insanity and revenge. The black soot…suffocating sensory deprivation…dissociation…what strata of punishment we do mete out.

The walls. Colorless and bland and all pervasive. White out…I feel myself wilting away and melting in this alloy. Being swallowed in its poisonous mist, in it’s intoxicating and all powerful dominion. The beast and I have become as one. The men and I have ensured nobody ever leaves here sane, safe and secure. Mind, body and soul are darkened…the eyes are the mirror of the soul…dark and ominous…

(1976)

…I awake to see Lou's face come into focus behind bars. Shaking the cobwebs from my mind, I look about the…the empty cell. NOOOOOO… despair, loneliness, heart-wrenching, gut-twisting anxiety…UN-real. The suffocating soot of solitude envelops and crushes me.

It hits me like a bolt of lightning. The damned car accident. I'm in jail. I'm in bondage in this filthy prison. NOOOO…I've gone too far and have lost control. Tears well up in my tired burning eyes.

My old friend is not saying anything. He doesn't even ask me what happened. He knows. But this could never happen to me, yet here I am, caged and trapped like some rabid beast. This can't be happening. The helplessness and despair is overwhelming. The red stain of shame reddens my face. So alone…so empty…

How could you've been so stupid Ritchy? Can't believe this…what did I do? The damn hydro pole…where's Pete?

The smells and sounds of this place are like nothing I've ever imagined. Hard steel bars surround me in my isolation…they have a distinct odor…am I smelling the alloy? Is that awful smell ink? It lingers in the air and mixes with the antiseptic cleansers.

These bars, they pierce through my skin and shoot through into my spine, leaving me cold and shivering. I'll vomit…my head is swimming…

I'm nothing but an extension of this steel cage and empty void. The place…it reverberates into nothingness…

The silence…it's deafening. It envelops my very being from head to toe and throughout. The cold…the deafening silence…these conspire to tell me I'm alone.

Lou and I are worlds apart already, yet there you are no more than a foot away. The wrought iron steel bars separate our existence. We're divided physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally. I'm now a crook and a felon. I screwed up.

I can read the pain in my friend's face now…but what can I say? Something very drastic has just taken place and no amount of superficiality can mask that stark reality. This is a real life crisis.

Watching my old friend Lou walk out a free man…into freedom…into the light of day…back into the mainstream of society…his footsteps echo in the dim corridor…such a grim reminder of my dreadful reality…my loneliness…isolation…I'm all alone…afraid…caught and helpless…

…The screw reappears and slides a pencil and two sheets of paper under my door. So, the stupid warden thinks he's going to receive a letter? He's nuts and delusional if he thinks I'm going to ask him for any favors. Never. It'll never happen. I'll just sit here in my cell and work on my word power. Bean cake and water are starvation diets compared to bologna sandwiches. I can sit in this cold and empty cage for many more years…I'm a veteran of the war. I'll wait.

But these memories are tearing me up…I've no control over their visits…they come and taunt and haunt me. I notice I've been squeezing my fists so tightly together that my knuckles have whitened. The course of my life…it wants to play havoc with me now…why? What's happened to me and why is it I don't care, and how is it I've changed so much? The course of my

life formed me. Was I a criminal before I came to jail? Does the criminal personality exist prior to incarceration? What the heck is wrong with me now? The damage runs so deep there's no hope of reversing it…

(1976)

…Executing the wide concrete courthouse steps and walking into the cathedral structure courtroom has me tremble with trepidation. The familiar butterflies I experience before my boxing bout palls in comparison to the knots of anxiety twisting my stomach in the courtroom. Lawyers are strolling along leisurely in their three-piece suits, conversing in language beyond my comprehension. This only serves to deepen my festering apprehension. God knows what they're saying.

My own lawyer, a short, black-bearded Jewish fellow is trying to reassure me that a guilty plea is the best approach to dispose of my auto theft charge. I'm wondering how I can plea any other way since it's obvious I'm guilty.

A deathly hush falls upon the spacious courtroom as the bespectacled clerk, with a sullen voice, solemnly announces the entry of the judge. Standing with as much confidence as the dying can summon, my knees tremble without respite.

The seasoned lawyers and crafty crown attorney begin their regular theatrics and usual formalities. The cases before mine are endless. I'm shocked to witness the utter magnitude of criminality in our small community.

The young and old, the women and men and even young teens are being pushed through as I watch in astonishment and wonder. Names are read, the person strolls to the front of the court as the lawyers speak on their behalf. The judge says only a few words, which surprises me a great deal. There sits a man in a black robe whom I know as the father of one of my classmates. A man who's received me in his large and spacious home. The judge is my schoolmate's father and today is to be something of a chastising father to me.

The day wears on and I wonder when my fate will be decided. Not a soul has been sent to jail so I feel mildly reassured I'll escape prison. The hour strikes four as I stare blankly in the court at my lawyer, the crown and the judge. What an ominous and foreboding feeling does this bring through me. Now the three of them are speaking of my case.

The well-groomed judge looks directly at me and asks me to rise. His eyes are clear as water and seem extremely stern. Through thin lips he asks what my plea will be and the lawyer promptly advises and reminds me to plead guilty. I'm pleading guilty to auto theft. Did I understand the verdict the judge asks, and I say that I do. Do I understand?

The learned judge, my buddy's father does seal and pronounce my fate to be a period of incarceration of thirty days. Pronouncing these dreadful words, he quickly leaves the courtroom.

I'm left bewildered and aghast. I can't believe he sent me to prison.

> The police officers seem to come out of hiding as they lay hold of my arms and begin to lead me out of the cathedral-like structure of the courtroom and the relative safety of society. Handcuffs are produced and my hands are bound behind my back.
>
> The police escort me through an underground tunnel connecting the courthouse to the jail. The journey through that subterranean tunnel extinguishes any flicker of hope I may have pertaining to my dilemma. My capture is complete and final. My freedom is being revoked…

…I could write like those damned lawyers if I want today. In fact, I can compose a grievance and forward it to the Ombudsman but this is not within his jurisdiction. All agencies are powerless to curb the entrenched and immutable powers of the penitentiary.

I'm not writing a letter to that whimpering warden unless it's a vitriolic diatribe denouncing the unconstitutional practices permeating this festering insane asylum. Maybe I should write him and his heads of security a threatening letter. I can compose many double entendres and issue veiled threats in this way. That would confuse them and give them food for thought.

Chapter 14
Prison Prey

The copper returns to my cell and orders me to face the back of my cell. They won't open my food slot unless I'm out of striking distance. None wants to have dirty water, cups of urine, or bags of shit thrown at them. The way I see it, they feed me shit in the bag and they get the same diet in return. Laughing, I know I can smash them when I shower, cuffs or no cuffs.

The idiot is standing in urine and doesn't realize it. I've been pissing through the crack of my door because I must keep the toilet water clean. The toilet water has come in handy a few times since my sink was disabled. I've been able to wash the burning Mace off my chest and even drink the stuff.

My hands flat on the cold cinder blocks, I hear the brown paper bag pass through my food slot and splat on the floor. Passing my hands across the smooth surface of my wall, I reflect that I've counted these bricks before. My home is seven feet wide, nine feet long, and twelve feet high. Give or take a brick.

The paint is starting to peel, and I think I'll layer off more of this dull yellow color. I bet I can peel the entire surface before I'm released. That's what I'll do. It's better than crossing out days as we see in the movies. I don't know why anyone would want to count days. That's crazy.

My food slot slams shut with a loud crash that bounces off my empty cavern. I hear the key turning the tumblers. Good, the dummy is gone. I don't want to see his ugly face.

These damn places. Four hundred days in such confining quarters. Some holes are tougher than this. I've seen many variations of the hole. Yeh, I've lived through them all and come out harder than when I went in. But that first time and what led up it--well, that was a shock . . .

Flashback--First Bit, 1976

> Shuddering and shocked, I walk silently through the narrow underground tunnel connecting the prison to the courthouse and the world above. I can't stop thinking about what just occurred and where I'm going. I'm incredulous and baffled. Where am I going? What's going to happen to me now? What's this underground network linking me to? This is surely hell. It's cold and our

footsteps bounce off hard concrete walls. Every step is distancing me further away from the world I know so well.

This is foreign territory.

The dimly lit tunnel swallows me whole. With a police officer at both sides, I can't do a thing. I want to run back and talk to the judge, but it's too late for that now. He left so abruptly after consigning my fate to this dungeon. Thirty days in this dark cavern is excessively harsh. How will he sleep knowing he sent me here? I was just a drunken kid, and it wasn't even my idea to steal the stupid car.

My thoughts are interrupted when we come to a stop at the jail door. It's just like my door at the local police station. Steel bars with a keyhole--simple, effective, and dreadful.

Hearing faint sounds of footsteps coming from inside the jail, I peer through the bars and see an old screw turn the corner in the dimly lit corridor. His ominous figure appears right out of the walls. He's thick and overweight and his gray garments stick oddly to his pot-bellied frame. His huge black army boots echo hollowly in the empty cave.

As the police officers remove my cuffs, the old screw asks me to place my hands through the bars as he produces a set of his own cuffs and proceeds to place them on my wrists. Once the cool metal's wrapped around my tiny wrists, he swings the door of the dungeon wide open.

Walking alongside the guard, I follow him through a labyrinth of corridors. Brought deeper into the infamous and putrid bowels of this prison, I feel my chest tighten in anxiety at every turn and my heart leap with every clang of steel door.

The place is not fit for animals. There's neither sunshine nor fresh air. Dull gray walls wrap themselves around my body, and the sickly off-green colored bars seem to shoot right through me. The floors are patterned the same as hospitals, and the smell of antiseptic fills my nostrils. This must be a hospital for the criminally sick.

We arrive at a large holding pen and the old screw sits down at a desk across from it. Letting out a heavy sigh, he slides a long sheet of paper into his old Olivetti typewriter. The routine questions are pouring out from his mouth as I struggle to focus. He asks me about my next-of-kin, date of birth, financial class, crime, education, religion, eye and hair color, tattoos or any distinguishing characteristic or mark.

I begin to wonder what class my family belongs to. Am I middle-class, lower-class or what? And who could I say is my next of kin? Fear grips my chest. Why is a next-of-kin required? Am I going to die in here?

Struggling to his feet, the old screw grunts that I should follow him into a cramped office where old filing cabinets line the walls, and a thin wire cage is filled with damp and weather-beaten brown boxes.

While I sit on a tiny steel tripod seat, my mug shot is snapped with an instant Kodak Polaroid. Grasping the plastic number board, I place it across my chest. I get the feeling I'm now among the most wanted criminals seen so

often on television. I realize why none of these guys ever smile during such photo shoots.

Jumping off the seat, I cast one last glance at Shannon Tweed in her centerfold picture pasted against the dull yellow wall. Did I smile for the side shoot? Somehow I don't think so.

Fingerprinting follows as the screw expertly rolls my fingers one at a time through ink pads and onto paper. It's obvious this guy has performed this menial task many times before.

Washing the dark ink from my fingertips with paper towels, I reflect that fingerprinting must be done for security reasons. Dread and worry wash over me. Could I become a victim of a heinous and bloody crime while inside? Could I be killed, disfigured, maimed, or crippled in here? Cringing, I hope everything will go well for me during my entombment.

Finished with the drill, I'm stripped of all my personal effects and watch the screw place my meager belongings in a small canvas bag similar to those used for night bank deposits.

The grilling session complete and my person stripped of all outside goods, I'm tossed into the shower. I'm certain many guys have been violated in this wide-open cubicle. There's no privacy at all. It's a natural haven for fags as far as I'm concerned. I'm a shy kid and can't see myself showering with a bunch of possible queers. Emerging quickly from my shower, I'm led into a large cell holding a dozen dirty cons.

These rough-looking cons, with twisting, colorful tattoos painted on large biceps, chain-smoke rolled cigarettes dangling from tobacco-stained fingers. Their pallid, expressionless faces in this cramped cell bear witness to months and perhaps years of hard lockup.

Many of the younger cons huddle together while two old winos slump on the black-spotted concrete floor. Their voices are low and many cast cold glances in my direction.

I've never, in my entire life, seen faces with such a hard look. The gray color and tight features reflect the grim surroundings. They've no hope. They're lost souls roaming in an empty void. I wonder what it is about this stinking place that transforms these guys? And what the hell did they do to end up here?

Scanning the bodies, a few cons are seated on the cold concrete floor against the wall in cross-legged positions with arms hugging their knees to their chest. Others rest supine in the corner, while still another lies sleeping on the pale green wood bench. How can he sleep?

The scene looks like something out of a horror movie. They look lost, for God's sake. Yet there's something more about these figures--they seem so . . . distanced.

The air is thick with the odor of stale cigarette smoke. They're caged prey in this animal pen. Why aren't they protesting? How can they accept their lot so casually?

Many empty stares dart in my direction. I dare not hold anyone's gaze. What the hell are they thinking? Why don't they say something?

What am I supposed to do now? The place is so damned small--where can I sit? Nobody gives a shit. Thoughtless and selfish bastards. I'll have to pick a place on the floor since the wood benches are full.

The old duty guard returns and begins to bark the names of those in the holding pen. I hear my last name, and I'm led to a station to pick up the standard issue consisting of a blanket roll, tee shirt, towel, comb, toothbrush, and toothpaste. Hugging the gray flannel blanket close to my chest, I proceed up two flights of green concrete stairs.

Entering deeper into jail, I cast an eye down long and narrow corridors. I can't believe what I'm seeing. These hallways are not suited for living. The living quarters are cramped, narrow enclosures reminiscent of short school hallways --no bigger. Unbelievable. It's unthinkable to have so many men occupying such small living quarters.

The Sudbury district jail cellblocks are filled to capacity. I'm amazed at the number of people in jail. The guys look like floating caricatures wandering and fading into nothingness. How can they live in such confining quarters? These corridors have to be something else. Surely the cons don't spend twenty four hours a day in here?

Deeper . . . deeper . . . deeper--the noise and echo get louder as we go. As I take in the artificial light, darkened windows, and gray floors and walls, nervousness cramps my stomach. Shit. I know I'll be hurt in this hellhole--I just know it. I can feel it in my bones.

Arriving at one of the countless cellblocks amidst the labyrinth of corridors, the fat old screw swings open the steel-barred door leading to a small and cramped living area. I'm not going in there, am I? The place is packed and these guys look crazy. I'm a one hundred and twenty pound sixteen-year-old, and they'll be placing me here with these gargantuan guys? Fear grips my chest. This is where they live--where I live. No room, no damn space--this can't be.

Standing beside the big old screw in the narrow catwalk, I look through the steel bars down the length of the packed cellblock and am filled with dread and trepidation. Huge ugly looking cons strut around the cramped area like wild and crazy animals. Six footers, with their thick arms and barrel-chests at every turn, their tattoos and hard glares everywhere. I can't go in there alone. The whole block can't be more than forty feet long and twelve feet wide. The cells are set inside like horse-racing stalls. They're locked but nobody's inside--the guys are roaming around the range, strutting . . . staring.

I step inside and the steel-barred door slams shut. A horrible feeling shoots through me. Standing motionless in temporary shock, I begin shuffling nervously past the cells. I must occupy one of these, but which one? The screw said number 3? Where the hell is that hole in the wall?

Trying to ignore the eyes, I begin reading the cell numbers inked atop the narrow steel bar running horizontally across the cells. Number twelve, eleven, ten, nine, eight . . . deeper and deeper into this God forsaken range, past the eyes . . .

Oh no. Despair and exasperation steal over me. I'm to share this cell with one of these strangers. Two damn bunks. This ordeal gets worse with every passing moment.

Dropping my issue through the bars on the top bunk, I turn slowly around, look down the narrow length of the small dorm, and am assaulted by several sets of eyes. Their cells locked, some of the guys are seated on two shiny metal picnic tables. They're staring at me like I'm some alien from outer space.

Following my every movement, the goons turn slightly sideways from their seated position while others stand with arms hanging at their sides like apes. The cons stare at me like vultures. They don't say a word or even nod a head. No smile, no friendly gesture, nothing. They just gawk. Why couldn't someone smile or say something?

I'm very uncomfortable and nervousness stirs in the pit of my stomach. I force myself to shut them out but their eyes burn into the back of my head. Anxiety and the deathly silence of the place are closing in on me already.

What am I going to do? Where do I go and what can I say? I'm done, man. Cooked big time. Nowhere to turn, nothing to do but face these monsters.

I can't shake the feeling that many sets of eyes are burning into my back. I can feel them eyeing me. I feel like the proverbial little lamb being led to slaughter. I've no idea when the shears will come out but the notion that some violence is coming is an unshakable feeling. I wonder what I'll do when the goons come for me. I can sense it. These madmen do not look like a friendly welcoming committee. My gut perceives imminent danger. This sucks . . . can't crumble . . . keep alert . . . must remain aware . . .

I thought I would be locked up alone and out of harm's way, but this dorm is small and open. Where did I get such stupid notions? Probably seen too much television.

The guys are not locked up in their individual cages during the day. They pace around this small hallway like animals in a zoo. The place is not safe and not supervised--I'm left to my own devices.

Exiting the cramped washroom at the end of the small range, I come face to face with three goons. They have perceived my fear and are keen on giving me an introduction to their world. They have probably been received in like manner and wish to return the favor. Apprehension seizes me from head to toe. I'm going to be hurt and I know it. Why? What the hell is it with these guys?

The three ominous figures are approaching and seem very earnest. What are they going to do? The tall redhead has a sneer on his face and an arrogant ugly look. Flanked by two goons, he struts with an exaggerated air.

Petrified, I'm backing up. I see their eyes burning into mine. What have I done for God's sake? The redhead is saying something but I can't hear what. I'm focused on his movements. Can't crumble, Ritchy . . . They keep approaching .

The belligerent redhead assumes a boxing stance. This triggers my boxing instincts. His friends fall out of hitting distance. He's not moving but his friends in the background are urging him on. They're taking delight in intimidating me. My hands are trembling and my stomach is churning with anxiety.

The crazed nut throws a hard right-hand sucker punch at my face. He wants to knock my teeth out. His face is creased with anger and hatred.

I instinctively duck and his knuckles crash bluntly into the steel bars inches above my head. Wincing, the belligerent redhead pulls his hand toward his body and clasps it with his left. The jerk has left himself wide open after trying to knock my teeth out. Anger replaces fear.

Remaining in my crouched position, my right hand shoots out automatically and crashes into his stomach. The redhead exhales loudly and doubles over. Mind reeling, body still in motion, I twirl and deliver a left hook to the side of his pockmarked face. That snapping blow rocks his head to the side as his eyes squeeze in pain.

Black. I'm seeing black, and fury erupts. That's it. I'm no longer afraid of what his friends might do. I'm in motion and will do whatever it takes to emerge victorious--kick, punch, bite, and poke eyes out. Anything to get away from these damned nuts.

Pumped, I'm prepared for retaliation. My body's tense, my energy surges. I'll hit and fight until I go out.

The goons are hesitant. They look shocked and are silenced. Anger is running through me and I want to finish this off once and for all. I'm pissed. These sullen sots started this and have participated by instigating it.

Screaming and hollering at the top of my lungs, I make a mad dash to the picnic table in the middle of the range and pick up a few plastic cups. I fling the green plastic cups through the bars, where they smash and shatter into millions of pieces, inches from the three goons.

The redhead is immobile. He's looking at me with pain and shame in his ugly face. I hurl insults and start to kick the steel door. The blows rattle the cage loudly and I know I must look like a raving lunatic. I don't care.

The henchmen are concerned now. Apprehension is written on their pale faces. I'm yelling louder and am out of control. The fear is gone.

The goon squad arrives on the scene. I hadn't noticed the screw peering into the cellblock or heard him trying to calm me. Many arms seize me and drag me out of the cellblock. The screws are breathing heavy and sweating. They must rest before dragging me another few yards.

I'm slammed in the hole for seven long days, eating nothing but dried bean cake. A camera overhead is in my face twenty- four hours a day, watching me pace my barren solitary cell with nothing on but an ugly looking gray-colored fireproof baby-doll that's cut like a woman's dress . . .

Time is time is time. Whether in the hole in the Sudbury jail or here in Millhaven. What's the difference? Not a big deal. Maybe I should write the warden and tell him his punitive measures are more fit for juveniles than real hard men like me. This is nothing. I've been through the ropes. Ripping open my brown paper bag, I pull my bologna sandwich out of its waxed covering. This is

better than dry bean cake. I can live on this stuff for years. The screws won't get good food like this in my prison, and that's a certainty.

Chapter 15 / Street Smart
(Flashback - The subculture - 1976 to 1980)

One, two, three, four, five and a half steps and turn; one, two, three, four, five and a half steps and turn; one, two, three, four, five and a half steps and turning my right shoulder brushes gently against the brick wall. Opening my eyes, I spin by my door.

I can pace this cell with my eyes closed for hours and I usually don't bump in my wall. Must have taken a long fifth step or something. The heels of my feet are callused and hard. I doubt I could be hurt if I were to step on a pointed object. The needle would probably bend against the hard brown skin.

How many miles can I travel in the time I spend pacing the hole? Ten, twenty miles a day? I bet I can if I keep on walking for eight hours. Yes, it took me how many hours to complete the walkathon for the United Way back home? Eight hours?

Oh well, I suppose once I get tired of walking I can talk to some of the guys, but what am I going to say? How are you doing? I don't think so. Forget it, I won't say anything to anybody.

Maybe I can work out again…nah, I get too damned sweaty and begin to stink…then again, I've taken more than one sponge bath in my toilet over the years. The water is clean and I wonder where it comes from…does it have chlorine? Lead and iron?

I don't like talking to myself like this but what can I do about it? No big deal, I think the trouble begins if I hear voices or if I respond to myself. I hear no voices and am aware of what's happening.

Do I know what's happening? What's the stupid parole board going to do with my case? Are they going to gate me? I fit their stupid criteria. In fact, the two first criteria are…screeching to a halt, I pick up the papers from the Parole board from my cot. Let me read that damned thing again. Oh yes…murder and armed robbery convictions. I have them both.

The stupid thing goes on to say I'm likely to commit a serious offence causing the death or serious bodily injury to persons once released. Of that you could be certain. But how can you prove intent and the possibility to re-offend? Is my past an accurate yardstick to determine my propensity for recidivism? It's my stupid classification officer that has referred my case and I've hardly ever seen or spoken to that bitch. She's not qualified to assess my high-risk proclivity. Vapid dilettante. Everybody knows everything but nobody knows sweet all. If they only knew.

So what if I possess a horrid institutional record. How many convictions in your kangaroo court over the last seven years? One hundred? More? I've spent over four hundred days in your holes.

Pacing rapidly, my heart is beating quickly. My arms are becoming tense and my mind is reeling. I'm getting dizzy. The joint security and their damn security matrix have ranked me as

high-risk and a violent con. I've been suspected of several takedowns around here on the strength of my knowledge of these events. Suspicious of being suspicious? Waterheads.

What's that little psycho in the next cell thinking? I'm in a bad situation now. The parole board will surely gate me if I get violent with him but he'll give me no choice in the matter. Slamming that little bastard would convince the board of my violence. Yet I can't let him come at me with a pointed blade and do nothing to defend myself. I heard him sharpening something and I'm sure of it. I'm not coming out of this shit house in a pine box like so many others.

Eighteen more months if they're successful in their application to gate me. I'll flatten it out in the hole for sure. I've heard of guys serving two years in the hole before. Big Mike and Franky spent two years in the hole for being suspects of a murder in here. If they can do it, so can I.

Some of the guys in here are more violent than me and have more horrific records don't they? I've seen them operate and heard them conspire. They approach me and provoke me and then discover they haven't the will and ability to finish me off. Steve got a swift kick in the face when he dared jump in front of me in the supper line. My right foot left the ground and smashed into his cheek with such force that he remained motionless and stunned for a few moments. The idiot has to be aware of what the hell he's doing at all times. Someone else may have driven a shank in his ribs. I may have saved his life.

Ralph had his nose broken but it could have been worse if I had been someone else. An elbow smash to the face and he fell heavily to the ground, but he was all right soon thereafter. He knew he screwed up.

If I allow myself to be stomped on, I'll be killed myself. What do they expect me to do when faced with such earnestness and willingness to kill? I'm being observed all the time. The guys know I'm quiet but they like to test my ability and conviction. I think they get bored and frustrated and create chaos to break the mind-numbing atmosphere around here. They risk their lives doing so.

The kid with the sharpened toothbrush next door is a classic example. He messed up and is now going to be hurt because of his inability to swallow false pride. I have the might of right on my side and will emerge victorious. I know what I'll do. I'm lightning fast and hit like a damned truck. He's done big time. I'm not afraid of him but rather am afraid of my anger and what I'll do to him if he dares come to the yard with me.

I'll not say anything to him through closed doors but he's sealed his fate with his rash and reckless words. He's put me in a position where I must act and act swiftly. The other guys heard his threats. I'm committed. He's crossed me.

It's going to be messy and very brutal when I see him. I'll say nothing. I'll approach him and we will get down and dirty.

The parole board is going to gate me for certain after this one, so I may as well make it worth it. Further, I can't risk giving him the opportunity to retaliate later.

Maybe my damaging rap sheet and joint record can bury me. But they don't understand the codes we have to live by to ensure our survival. By virtue of having to adhere we label ourselves dangerous offenders. What else would you idiots have me do? Rat out? Go to PC? NEVER. I'll never check-in and spend my time with rats, pedophiles and rapists. I would smash them all and have to stay in the hole forever…it's a lose-lose situation here…

(1976 - 1980)

…My rap sheet palls in comparison to my newfound peers. The rounders have been in places I've only heard talked about through my brother. There

are the provincial reformatories with their respective security levels and mention of some federal penitentiaries located in Kingston.

I wonder how these guys could end up serving so much of their lives locked up in these facilities. I'm convinced I'm much smarter than they and that I'll never allow myself to suffer such a dreadful fate.

I've also become aware of the reputation one is granted according to the amount of time he spends and where he spends it. There's a belief that one will proceed through the prison system through an established route, beginning at the minimum security provincial level and moving into the federal.

Everyone I meet is progressing through the system at various rates. The smartest criminal postpones the inevitable the longest. The very smartest avoid the pen altogether. Some guys visit the pen at the age of twenty while others see inside the walls at thirty.

I learn about Monteith, Maplehurst, Guelph and Millbrook provincial reformatories. These are prisons one could expect to visit by the ages of sixteen and surely before the age of eighteen and twenty. I'm mentally prepared to go to Millbrook, a maximum-security provincial institution, and call it quits from there. I know in my heart I'll end up there, but I just don't know when it will happen. I figure I could beat the records of my peers and not see Millbrook until I'm in my late twenties.

The guys comment on how lucky I am to avoid the reformatory. I'm only serving small sentences in the local jail. I never receive a sentence in excess of three months, which is necessary to transfer me to a provincial facility.

I believe I'll never be caught. Not for anything serious anyway, and if I do, so what. I'll do my eighteen months in Millbrook and hang up my balaclava and quit my partying at that time.

I've accepted I could receive a few short provincial sentences before being hit with eighteen months. Despite this reality, I'm ready to proceed up to Millbrook and that's that. It's a kind of insane goal ingrained in my warped mind.

I get submerged in the sub-culture and begin to understand and adopt the street and criminal mentality very well. Stool pigeons, rape-hounds and diddlers become prey. Cops are the enemy. I learn the codes and live by them religiously. Being solid is a priority for me and not to be compromised. Lawyers are my servants and should never be told the truth about anything.

Junkies should never be trusted. These guys rat out their mother for a fix. Never involve others if caught because only one person accepts the responsibility of doing time. When picked up for questioning, ask to call a lawyer. Don't sign anything is the cardinal rule.

Selling drugs is my main source of revenue on the street. When I run out of my own dope supply, I play the middleman between the many buyers and the host of dope sellers. When the dope market runs dry, I fence stolen merchandise. I keep a few shoplifters/boosters very busy in the many

department stores in town. Grocery stores are also being ripped off in the meat market, as carts of expensive meats are rolled out the front doors.

Break and enters keep me scheming regularly. Sneaking into windows late at night, I call my friendly cab driver and drive away with televisions and stereo equipment that fill the trunk.

Drug dealers and buyers are targets for rip-offs when my brokering is sparse. Stealing dope from the dealers and ripping off the buyers for their dirty cash is a very risky proposition. I almost get seriously beat up and even killed on a couple of these deals. Yet, I always manage to get away without being hurt.

My criminal convictions mount as I near my twentieth birthday. Many of these stem from drunken fights at local taverns and parties. I have a tendency of causing disturbances and breaking anything in sight when drunk. I'm a ticking time bomb looking for places to explode. I know I'm a violent drunk but I don't care. I fight almost every weekend at various taverns.

At twenty, I have not even smelled the bowels of a reformatory. By this time, every member of our gang has seen the reformatories and some have even been sent to the federal penitentiary. Upon their release, the pen-timers tell me stories about their time and relate that pen-time is not so bad.

They say a guy could do his own time inside as long as he minds his own business. They talk about the solidarity among the cons and the codes behind the walls. It all sounds very strange to me. As far as I'm concerned, my limit and departure point is still the magic number of eighteen months in Millbrook.

1980 rolls into 1981 and I still smell like roses. By this time, I'm partying all over the place and am well known to the authorities. I have a reputation on the street as a street fighter. The crew likes to instigate a few fights to beat the boredom. Some of these fights are pretty messy and wild at times. In fact, some of them are severe enough to warrant headlines. At one party, there were at least six people hospitalized.

I'm barred from every hotel in town at least four times over. Nobody feels safe in my presence. I'm totally unpredictable. I could joke with a person one minute and in the next instant smash my fist into his face. The guys joke with me and call me a grizzly bear because of my unpredictable behavior. I joke back by saying I'm predictably unpredictable.

Girls are commodities and sleeping with as many as possible is an ongoing competition. I get a few sexually transmitted diseases in the process. I discover some of the prettiest are the dirtiest.

Boat motors, snow-blowers, power tools and everything else is lifted and sold. My fence is a big fat man weighing four hundred pounds who's as tight as a tight fisted roll of twenties.

The fights scare me at times. I place men in comas on two different occasions in a fist fight and almost blind another. I like to mix it up and fight with bottles of wine and liquor. On many occasions, I break full

bottles atop craniums, smash glasses into people's faces and sucker punch anyone who dares look at me the wrong way…

…Maybe the authorities have a solid case for the gating application after all. However, they don't understand. The screws are setting me up and making me look crazier than I am. What do they have on my file that I've not seen? What kind of bullshit have they inscribed therein? I could only imagine. Two SHU applications.

Sure, there were a few broken noses and cracked jaws, a few escape attempts, witness to take downs, knowledge of major drug deals inside, but that's no big deal in here man. What's the fuss all about? I never killed anyone in here or hurt them that bad. It was take them out or be murdered. I know how to survive here.

I bet the idiots are pissed off because of the riots, sit-downs, hunger strikes, work stoppages and incitements I stirred and spurred.

Wait. How do they know I'm going to kill them? They always get threatened, so that's nothing new. Somehow, I'm more convincing. They know what they've done don't they? Yes, the goons. Self-preservation is spurred by fear. They're scared.

Now doesn't fear spawn character defects? Those long lists of human failings such as the seven deadly sins of pride, greed, anger, sloth, gluttony, envy and lust? They have them all.

Moreover, what's in my genetic predisposition that destines me to fulfil this deadly plan? Why have I been so infused? Why am I so different from other cons? It's hard to understand. What is it with me? Nature versus nurture. Hobbes said life was nasty, brutish and short, but Rousseau said we were innately good. What am I? I was good but am no longer.

I must ponder these issues. They're very obscure but there must be an answer to the riddle. I feel it in myself. I know my true colours now. Sitting quietly and objectively away from society, I become painfully aware of its wicked, brutal and unjust ways. I'm more aware than most people.

Are there constellation of genes which predispose me to change much easier for the worse? Yes, a bad upbringing coupled with this milieu exacerbates my being and pollutes me. I'm powerless to arrest this moral metamorphosis…I'm normal after all…it's normal to want to kill these madmen in light of what they do…I too am involved in the fight or flight self preservation…we're all very similar.

Chapter 16 / Bad Moon A Risin'
(Flashback - Bar brawl - 1981)

My mind is wandering; I better try and focus on what's going on around here. I must stay in the here and now lest they keep me for the rest of my life. They've set their snare. Throughout many years they have provoked and antagonized me, and now they want to label me a dangerous offender to keep me locked up. Our history is long and varied but one element has remained static over these many years. Them and us. They, with the corrupt power to pull the strings and us with might and will to survive.

Their long lists of transgressions are imbedded on the tablet of my mind's eye. The whole system, from top to bottom, is geared to tyrannize and oppress. I was in this shit house only three days when I incurred twelve institutional offences. They set me up and have carried out personal vendettas against me. I'll come out and show them what oppression and tyranny is all about. I'm tougher than nails and they're frail and weak. I don't fear death but those rotten coppers cherish their very existence.

I've seen and tasted what most men never witness; even my fellow cons remain blind in some respects. My perceptions are clear and my intentions natural. They have no right to treat me in such callous ways. Where's objectivity and where are the impartial watchdog committees to put a stop to this reign of terror, perpetrated by this dynasty of travesty?

I drink water from toilet bowls and am subjected to their brutal and desensitizing regime. They're creating a monster. I sport chains as women adorn themselves with jewelry. I fight in the trenches like men of war, but with no clear picture of who's lurking behind the enemy line. The hypocrisy in this corrupt beast is impenetrable. The human violations and draconian measures are well screwed in their entrenched and immutable powers.

Two thousand five hundred days of complete insanity, with countless life threatening confrontations. Four hundred days in this hole. Hatred, anger and fury as my only companions. If people only knew what happens in here, they would reconsider the value of rehabilitation and corrections. Oppression, tyranny and violence don't correct. Ceaseless provocation and incessant antagonism only produces deep psychoses. I'm human and will spiral into this dark abyss of madness and insanity. Who wouldn't? People will understand why I'll come out and kill them all.

The copper approaches my cell for his regular count. I'll hide myself behind the wall and disrupt the count. The jerk knows I'm here but he must see me nonetheless. Where could I go idiot box? Are they ever stupid. I'm not showing myself and am remaining very quiet. You'll have to open my door and be wrestled again. Bring in the goon squad, the gas and the Billy clubs.

The screw curses under his breath and walks away. I hear him on the phone. The goon squad will be coming soon. What will I do to them to scare them this time? I'll pretend I'm dead. I'll wrap my shirt around my neck and pretend I suffocated myself. When they approach, I'll grab the bastards by their shirtfronts, spit in their faces and lash out with my pencil. I'll threaten them with death and promise to move to Kingston upon my release in just a few days. This should sober them up a bit and give them something to think about for awhile. I'll act crazy and look very serious and insane.

That should be easy enough, since I'm really going to kill the whole stinking lot of them. My bluff has turned into reality. When did that happen I wonder? I wasn't that bad when I first came here…

(1981)

> …I awake at noon and by approximately six or seven p.m., drinking everything I can get my hands on, I walk into the crowded rock 'n roll bar. I'm pounding back the drinks and having a merry ol' time. I'm sitting with three beautiful ladies and want to take them all home with me.
>
> As the evening progresses, some older gentleman joins our table. This sucker is quite generous buying drinks for my companions and me. I figure he enjoys my lady friends because this guy is spending a lot of money and is not cheap. Sit down and buy a round chump.

As the evening wears on, the generous chap indicates he has some strong liquor up in his room and wonders if my lady friends and I would join him for more drinks? I'm certainly into it so I readily accept. I'm already very drunk but that doesn't deter me from wanting more.

Without another thought, I accompany the gentleman up to one of the hotel rooms upstairs to drink some liquor. I guess my lady friends are doing fine because they don't come along. Mildly disappointed, I proceed to his room on the second floor to drink like a real man.

Arriving in the dingy hotel room, I discover the old guy has no liquor after all. In fact, the gentleman starts giving me the creeps. He's saying something to the effect that being in the company of so many women, I must share some of their characteristics. What kind of erroneous logic is this?

Stunned and angered by his boldness and stupidity, I realize the bastard lured me upstairs with a hidden agenda. He has no booze in the room and it's obvious to me this guy is a homosexual. I'm starting to feel locked and confined in the tiny hotel room with this idiot.

He triggers memories of the many instances of when as a kid hitch-hiking, faggots would pick me up and make moves on me. These flashbacks begin flooding my mind and heighten my anxiety level. He's slurring sexual references as the images dance in my mind. My mind is clamored with thoughts of panic and anger. Fierce anger begins to surface.

Drunk and swaying, he approaches, and without warning, reaches out and places his hand on my groin. He weighing in at approximately two hundred and fifty pounds and standing at five feet ten, and me at a mere one hundred and fifty pounds spread on a five feet ten lanky frame.

I flip out in utter terror and fury. Hitting him with all I have, I lash out angrily and slam him for all the queers who have ever dared scare me as a kid. My fury erupts as a roaring volcano as I land powerful boxing combinations to his face and head.

He's falling back…swaying to the side…he can't fight…going down already…adrenaline pumping through my veins…breathing hard and fast now…tense and fast. His hulking figure hits the floor with a dull thud. Staring down at him in disbelief, his heaving chest crackles as blood and spittle bubble from his mouth. He looks up at me with resignation and defeat. He's beat and no longer a threat.

Arriving home that evening, I speak with my brother about the blood on my shirt and the fight, and he advises me to call an ambulance because, as he says, the guy may be seriously hurt. I ignore the warning…

The next day, walking towards the city on a beautiful sunny day with my girlfriend, a car screeches to a halt a few feet away. Three burly civilian dressed detectives jump out of the unmarked vehicle and circle me. Looking into their serious faces, I detect their earnestness and piqued nervousness. I know these detectives and they me.

Surrounded by these gargantuan goons, my girlfriend backs away in fear. Keeping my eyes on the anxious looking detectives, I stand motionless

without saying a word. They move in, tightening the ever-constricting circle.

The six-foot-five clean-cut detective with high European cheekbones orders me to enter the car in an abrupt tone. There's nothing polite or courteous about his request/demand. Looking squarely into his gray anxious eyes, I ask if I'm under arrest. Not one of them answers.

The big blond-haired rookie with the bulging biceps spilling out of his white short-sleeved shirt reaches to grab me. His huge paw covers my whole upper arm. The older looking policeman with short cropped gray hair and thin moustache comes up behind me and starts pushing at my back as the clean cut cop holds my head down.

The dark blue sedan quickly speeds away leaving my girlfriend in shock and bewilderment. Flanked by two eager and anxious looking detectives in the back of the unmarked cruiser, they begin asking a million questions.

Pulling into the police station, the officers step up the intensity of their interrogation. I'm searched and tossed into the dark and damp holding cells where urine and vomit fills the air. Nothing new about this except this time there's a skinny, gray-haired detective with a receding hairline sitting cross legged on a blue plastic chair in front of my cell with a thin black note pad resting on his upper lap. He just stares at me and remains silent.

Trying to ignore him, I lay quietly on my checkerboard steel cot and begin to reflect on the earnestness the cops have shown on my arrest. And what about this detective in front of my cell? What the hell is he doing here?

My thoughts are interrupted when three uniformed police converge on my cell and drag me to an interrogation room upstairs. It's not a custom of mine to leave my cell so I have to be dragged. Once inside the "hot room", my eye catches sight of a table in a corner of the tiny cubicle where statements and pen are readily at hand.

I figure they're going to try to get me to talk. They never try to get me to talk, so why are they employing this method now? They know I'm solid and would never say boo to them. This gives rise to some mild apprehension.

Inside the concrete room, the detectives sit me down on a small wooden chair and begin their interrogation. It does not take very long before they become very frustrated with me. Every question is met with my polite but firm request to call a lawyer. I'll say nothing more and of that I'm certain. I'll content myself by sitting back and watch them as they take turns trying to intimidate, coerce and cajole me. Surrounded by brick and mortar, I watch as they persist in their head games.

Tiring of my silence, they drag me back to my dingy cell to re-strategize. The Gestapo won't allow me my phone call and I'll say nothing except request to call a lawyer. And when I do get a lawyer, I'll ask him to get me out. Or I'll wait in jail and find out what evidence the crown and

police have against me before I say anything to anybody. That's just my training.

The whole scenario replays itself all night long and continues very late into the small hours of the morning. I'm being bounced to and fro into different rooms and back to my cell.

At one of these trips around the police station, I'm led into a police line up. Fed up and disgusted at not having an opportunity to call my lawyer, I decide to lie down on the floor during the identification process. This infuriates the cops but I figure they're burying themselves deeper every time they breach my rights.

At another grand tour of the famous cop shop, the policemen produce a 3 by 5 photo of the man I beat up the night before, and upon seeing and recognizing him, I slap it out of the detective's hand. Outraged, he flips and grabbing a handful of my hair, screams inches from my face. Looking back into his snarled face, I advise him that I'll defend myself if they decide to get rough and tough.

I'm a little worried after seeing the picture and imagine the queer charged me for assault.

The games persist and no one tells me why I'm in custody or what this fanfare is all about. The night just wears on and on…

…The wall is cold on my back. Yes, I've been cornered before. So what…my shirt is firmly in place, eyes rolled back, I look dead for certain. I'm going to scare the living daylights out of these rats. The pencil is going to terrorise these goons…

…Placing the pencil between my forefinger and index finger, I close my hand and make a fist…the dammed point can penetrate his eye and pierce his brain…thrusting my hand out quickly, grey matter spills out…yelling in agony, the big goon stiffens in terror and pain…my foot slams into his balls and he doubles over with a loud oomph…

…There's panic, pandemonium and chaos…I'll have to take out as many of them as I can before they subdue or kill me…

…Running over to the steel barrier in the hole, I block entry and exit of the hole…the screws are my prisoners now…three more butt-heads to go…I wonder if I can hit hard and fast enough to get all of them…

…The sucker lunges desperately for the panic button as I slam my elbow into his square jaw…his big head snapping back, I grab a handful of his thick mane and place the palm of my hand on his chin…twisting as hard and as fast as I can, I hear his scrawny neck snap like a twig…not a sound more, he falls heavily to the floor…

…The little screw is making a mad dash for the barrier with keys almost in the tumblers…the other screws have already arrived and are hoping they'll be let in…

Sprinting to break our distance, I run and leap into the air and crash my foot into the small of his spine…with a loud bellow he jerks wildly and falls to his knees as the keys clang to his side…kicking the key ring out of the his reach, I grab the little screw by the balls and jab my fingers in his eyes…moist and hot…he yelps and screams in sheer horror…

…Shit…my food slot opens with a loud clang and a battery of screws tell me they're going to tear gas me. They're not going to risk coming in.

Chapter 17 / The Arraignment
(Flashback - The shocker - 1981)

My plan isn't working…damn-it. I've smelled and tasted tear gas before and it's wicked and brutal. I better get up and show my face. Leaving the shirt wrapped loosely around my neck, I slide off my bunk. Looking through the thin rectangular 4 by 6 food slot, I see no tear gas gun. They have something on hand but what is it?

Suddenly, a red nozzle appears and spews a powerful jet of glacial water. This red fire hose nozzle has enough power to squeeze out three hundred pounds of pressure per square inch. Firemen use this nozzle to reach upper floor apartments on city skyscrapers.

The ice-cold stream slams into my chest with such force I'm thrown three feet to the back of my cell. Stinging my bare chest, I close my eyes and turn my body in many different positions. Holy shit, this is fun. A damned shower after all…groping blindly, it's starting to sting big time…reaching and grabbing hold of my thin mattress, I use it as a shield. The water slams into the striped mattress and sprays every wall in my cramped concrete cubicle. Flooding my cell and soaking my mattress, I wonder what I'll sleep on tonight.

The water keeps coming through and soaks my entire cell. Moving and splashing around in water up to my ankles, my clothes are soaked and the water-laden mattress is pure dead weight. Arms burning, my shoulders ache trying to keep the mattress as my defense. When are they going to stop? I can barely hold the weight anymore and make a move for the corner of my bed. The spray can't reach here. Let them come and get me here the retards…where's that pencil?

My dungeon door slides opens and the shuffling of many feet invade my home. The famous Mace gun appears and they threaten to shoot me again. Standing on my bunk, I decide to step down and let them wrestle me some more.

Stepping on the floor, hands grope everywhere…I'm being stripped of everything. My pants are being cut with oversized scissors and my shirt tossed out into the wet-soaked corridor.

What a bunch of henchmen. My mattress dragged out, the guys in adjacent cells are reacting now. Good…the toilets are heard overflowing and the doors are being banged. Party time guys. Give these assholes something to work for. Flood your cells, refuse to go back to your cells when showering or in the yard, spit at them, throw your hot coffee in their filthy faces, piss out the cracks of your door, throw your shit at them, threaten them, revolt, Vive la Revolution les gars.

Even my neighbor who I'll have to hurt is in line with me now. We have our hate and fury in common against these tyrants. Yell at them some more. Let us raise our voices and sound our murderous fury throughout this putrid stinking hellhole. Will somebody please kill one of these coppers? Some of you are doing forever in here and you have nothing to lose. Let us not kill one another but kill these real enemies. They have turned our anger against ourselves. It's misdirected. Can't you see?

The coppers rush out of my cell and the door slams shut. I walk to the back of my cell and run toward my door. Slamming my bare foot into the hollow metal surface of my cell door, the reverberating crash explodes in my mind. The guys in the main compound must hear that one. Come on, let's get it on. I'll tear your arm off and beat your head in. I'll rip your throat out with my bare hands and stuff your mouth with your guts. I'm black with fury. Black…the world and I are not connected…a senseless cosmos…

(1981)

...I'm cuffed, placed in the back of the cruiser and driven to the courthouse a few blocks up the street. Exhausted, my appearance is haggard and my body weary and fatigued. Escorted to the prisoners' box in a mental fog, I settle behind the oak partition and glass enclosure. Squinting through bloodshot eyes, I scan the courtroom and see my brother, sister and girlfriend looking on. My brother's gesturing is telling me everything is going to be all right. I try smiling but it won't come.

I still have not been informed of the charges at this point, thus when the court appointed lawyer approaches me in the prisoner's box, I can't tell him what I'm being held for. This short, stout fellow with the receding hairline raises an eyebrow and indicates he'll speak to the crown attorney and return with the answer. I watch him intently as he strides toward the crown attorney seated at his paper filled desk. The two exchange a few words and my little advocate returns to see me in my box.

The court appointee returns with great news. He says the court have no charges pending. I'm extremely pleased with this news and picture myself walking home in the next few moments. I could jump out of the prisoner's box and return to my affairs with zest and enthusiasm knowing I've outwitted and outlasted my interrogators. Eat humble pie and egg in your face. I cast a glance at my brother and smile victoriously. He winks with satisfaction and understanding.

Shuffling sounds announce the entry of the judge. We stand with respect as the clerk solemnly declares the process underway.

I sit back down in the prisoner's box with confidence and relief as I watch the learned and polished looking judge rummage through his papers on his bench. The judge looks down his large bench at the crown attorney and asks curiously why I'm in custody. The judge goes on to say that he has no charges before him to read and is perplexed over the entire affair.

The crown attorney, equally baffled, responds by saying he too has no indication as to why I sit in the prisoner's box. The court appointed lawyer reiterates their remarks and I'm not about to tell them I beat up a gentleman two nights prior.

At this juncture of the proceedings, my heart is racing as I envision myself jumping over the prisoner's box and out into the streets after the dismissal. My brother, girlfriend and I will celebrate my victory. I've always wanted to experience the feeling of jumping out of the prisoner's box and walking out the front doors of the spacious courtroom. I'm certain today is the day.

The judge is about to end the session and pronounce my innocence when his attention is distracted by noise coming from the back of the courtroom. Grimacing and frustrated, the judge casts his glance toward the back of the spacious courtroom. Two uniformed policemen have entered the courtroom and are gesticulating in the direction of the crown attorney. The crown attorney begs the judge's indulgence as the policemen hand him some papers.

Reading the papers brought to him, the crown leisurely gets up and strolls toward the judge's elevated bench. Dread…what the hell is all this about? Assault? My hopes for release are dashed at that very moment. I feel my heart sink in my chest as I peer at my brother's disappointed face.

Handing the judge the papers, I try to read the crown's features but can't discern them whatsoever. My legal aid lawyer is looking around the court as he shuffles uncomfortably in his seat. I'm getting very nervous and quite apprehensive as the judge reads. I'm trying desperately to get some message somewhere but all I receive are expressionless stares.

Placing the papers before him in a neat pile, the judge looks at me sternly and begins to speak. Peering over his reading glasses, the judge asks me to remain seated for the reading of the charge against me. That's extremely odd and unusual because I'm always asked to stand for the reading of the charges. The judge's deep blue eyes stare deeply into my own. He's looking straight through me.

Defeated and exasperated, I slump in my hard wood chair waiting for words that will cast light on my situation…

"On or about the eleventh day of May, in the district of Sudbury, in the said regional municipality, the said accused, Richard Dubé, is charged with first degree murder...

…What…What…First degree murder? Wait a minute here… God…NOOOO…this can't be…despair…heart-wrenching…black...my world is black...the silence...a football in my stomach…the utter and deafening silence...my mind is somewhere else...help me…I'm slipping…the cosmos and I are detached...where am I...the words first degree murder spell…twenty-five years in prison…at least...the faces around me are gone and have no features...the fog settles...dizzy…weak…losing it man…swimming...my head is swimming nowhere...the lights are dull...the void is deep and the abyss is swallowing me up...deep shame colors my countenance but the pall remains...I'm gray as the prison walls...my spirit's sullied...a dead body roams with no home...I must be punished to atone...what have I done...hands settle upon me...police...the metal from the cuffs seem loose...my body is limp and my strength sapped...guilt and shame haunt me...the air feels so heavy...I can't draw a breath...sadness fills my being...shock and trauma seize...faint voices echo in the recesses of my mind...murder…can't be…who cares what they say...I killed a man...he's gone from this world forever...I had no right...why...why...footsteps… hollow and deep corridors…jangle of keys...walls all around me and a smell of stale urine...faces...all these faces...don't look at me...I'm alone and afraid...what have I done...he can't be dead...I only hit him with my hands... tragic...fatal...final...God gives life and no man has the right to take it…there's nothing left...hell closes its door upon me...unreal...this is just a dream…a vicious nightmare…where am I…what is this place…what are they saying…?

…My fury subsides as the water drips from my naked flesh. Water droplets dripping…dripping away the fury and resentment seizing my entire being. Layers of my old self dripping away. Exposed as a savage and wild beast…I strut like a lion seeking its prey…caged in a zoo.

The bastards went too far this time. They have just nailed another spike in their coffin. How can they justify their excesses and get away with this brutality? Why did they have to do this? I pose no threat to anyone in this empty cave. Where do they think I've gone? They saw my face for their stupid count, so why did they have to take their assault to this level? Because they're barbaric and sadistic clones. That could be the only answer…the only reason for their insanity.

They take delight in administering their brand of corrections and corruption. They think they're impervious to swift and lethal justice…OH no, I had enough of this bullshit…no more from anyone.

Chapter 18 / Shakin' it
(Flashback - Wacko warden - 1981)

Damp, cold suffocating cavern. White out fever. The screws and their senseless brutality and torment. Their day is near. Keep driving because nothing breaks this guy. Wait till I get you in my dungeon.

I'm freezing…shivering. I can't let anyone else suffer this brutality…I need that paper and pencil; I must write a letter confessing I'm the culprit who started the fire in the yard last week. The other guys had nothing to do with it. I'll take the rap and you'll have to let them go. I may not like the guys very much but I can spare them this hellish treatment. I don't wish this shit on anyone…anyone but those who mete it out that is.

That damned fire and soot made breathing difficult. The fiberglass covering set atop the wall outside burnt like an inferno. That was an adrenaline rush. It's a good thing the guys screamed and hollered long and hard enough for the screws to get us out on time, or we may have been asphyxiated. Flakes of black soot fell from the heavens like volcanic ash.

There are times when breathing is difficult down here too. Is it hyperventilation as the mad doctor says or are you poisoning me? I swear I'm going to die at times because I can't breathe. I can't take a full breath. Can you kill me and make it look like an accident? I know the crazed doctor would perform his autopsy and cover up your murderous plot. He's on my hit list the prick.

I've had plenty of experience with these mad medical men inside these joints. Glorified dope pushers and collaborators. You have violated your sacred oath doctors. Where are your ethics? I remember the time when you granted me aspirin after my surgery. Yes…you demented doctors will be made to pay…

(1981)

> ...Walking shakily toward the bars of the prison cellblock, I encounter the short bespectacled doctor who hands me a Dixie-cup full of medication. He says this will keep me calm and help me sleep. I nod and swallow the

various pills. There must have been over ten pills in that small paper container.

Moments pass when the sleeping medication begins to make me drowsy. I can barely keep my eyes open as the anxiety in the pit of my stomach turns to numbness. Blackness comes and I drift into oblivion…

I awaken from my artificially induced slumber and wonder how long I've been sleeping. Standing, I wobble to my cell door and am surprised to see it's broad daylight. Lifting the small steel latch on my barred door, I push and swing my door open. Walking into the bright and empty range, I sense I must have slept a very long time. I'm famished.

Making my way to the end of the range, I call out to the screw on duty. A fat screw with thick glasses approaches and I ask him how long I've been sleeping. Three days he says and goes on to ask if I'd like to see the doctor again.

My mind struggles to remember what happened in the last four months but my mind draws a blank. What was everyone saying after the verdict was read? I knew first degree murder meant I was facing a minimum term of imprisonment of twenty-five years and in some very tough prisons.

I killed someone…

I'm sure I had a bail hearing but I don't remember being there. I'm in a state of severe shock. Yes, I'm in shock. Why am I alone on a range capable of holding twenty men? I'm caged up like a wild animal. What have I done to deserve such treatment? Yes, I've killed someone but it was a tragic accident. It WAS an accident. Why am I alone on this range?

These no good for nothing barbarians know I would never kill someone on purpose. The police and district attorney must have given them some information about the murder. The screws know me in this shithouse. I've been here often enough for them to gather a profile on my character. They know I'm not a damned killer.

I may like to cause a few problems in jail but I won't do so under such serious charges. I don't need anyone saying I'm violent. They know this. They hate me and like to power trip. They are punishing me for things I did in the past in here. Jerks, I already paid the price for those Mickey Mouse charges and I don't think it's fair to have to pay twice for the same thing. This is bullshit. Plain old bull…

My mind still cloudy and foggy, I ask the screw why I'm alone on the range and he advises me he doesn't know. Have I done anything wrong in the last few months I ask? He tells me I did nothing wrong in the last four months to warrant such isolation. Now I'm baffled and begin to suspect the warden is harboring a personal resentment against me.

Who does he think he is? Do you assholes think you could keep me stoned and half-conscious for the next six months? I don't think so. To hell with it, I'll accost the warden during his regular rounds around the prison. The stupid warden loves to walk around his jail like some big shot and strut his arrogant and pompous airs. I know he can't resist these trips and ego boosters. It gives him a sense of power and control over those in captivity…

Early one morning, the predictable warden, cloaked in his exaggerated air of importance, strides proudly outside the range I'm locked in. Flanked by two burly screws, he stops abruptly and peers contemptuously through the bars. The idiot is trying to play the mob boss or something.

Trying to ignore his ugly look, I ask if he'd consider placing a few inmates on the range with me, because frankly, I don't understand why I should be kept alone on a range capable of holding twenty men.

Raising his thick eyebrows, neck crooked slightly, the warden casts a victorious glance at his two cronies. The smug looking screws seem to be enjoying his sense of power and control. Crossing his arms over his now pumped-out chest, he juts out his hairy chin, and remarks sharply through disdainful lips that the only company I'll keep will be the company of my conscience in solitary confinement.

Leering provocatively, the arrogant ass goes on to say I've already killed a man and will probably do it again. With these biting words, he turns and walks away abruptly with his two flunkies following close behind.

That rat bastard is power tripping like a tyrannical megalomaniac. Cursing him under my breath, I start thinking about ways to get him. I'm at his mercy and see no way of escaping. I'm infuriated and enraged. I've been alone four months already and have five more months to wait before my trial is scheduled to begin. I'll go insane for sure if I'm not allowed to be around other people. This megalomaniac really burns me up…

A few days after my little chat with the oppressive warden, I receive a visit from my older brother who sees I'm visibly shaken over the warden's head games. My brother proposes a great idea to deal with the tyrant.

Gesturing through the thick plexy glass partition in the visiting area, Mike motions an ingenious idea that will soften up the tyrant of the day.

I figure the no good son of a bitch will have to be taught a lesson. Nobody, nobody messes with me and nobody power trips without feeling something. Who the hell does he think he is carrying out a personal vendetta in this prison? Is he above the law? Maybe the laws he knows how to break but we know how to break a few of our own. He'll be made to pay and pay dearly.

He'll be humbled the rat. He'll come to realize you can't push a man too far and expect to go unpunished. The name is Dubé and don't forget it buster brown. The whole jail will be made to pay the price for his insolence and their quiet collaboration. Wrong guy to play with bucko. His little puppet soldiers will pay the price too.

We must teach them all a valuable lesson not to tyrannize and torment the inmates. They're not impervious and beyond reckoning by those they take so much delight in hurting.

My brother will go out late this evening and place dynamite beneath the warden's car. The fuse will be ignited and his brand new car will be blown up in his driveway. That will destroy his false sense of security. My brother will drive by the prison immediately following the car bombing and throw a

dynamite stick into the prison's front yard to signal the job has been completed.

I figure this ought to send these monsters a pretty good message, and if that doesn't soften them up, their porches, garages and boats will follow. I hope they listen at this point because more is yet to follow. Property first, but persons come next.

I return to my empty range after the visit with my brother and spend the day pacing anxiously. I know there's light at the end of the tunnel. I look at the screws and see their last arrogant looks. I think about what the warden will feel like soon. He should have listened and shouldn't be so hard and insensitive. The jerk has no idea what he's doing or who he's messing with.

I'm relieved evening finally arrives. Lying on my small bunk, I wait patiently for the explosive signals to be sent; the beautiful blasts that will signal revenge and my last day alone on this long and empty range.

At approximately midnight, lying quietly on my bunk, I feel the foundation of the jail tremble. Sitting up on my cot, I watch and listen in astonishment as the steel-barred doors of my cage rattle. Placing my naked feet on the cold hard floor, the tremors flow throughout my whole body. I swear an earthquake has struck. Such is the power of the dynamite in the prison front yard. Incredible. The warden must be shivering in his shitty pants by now.

Closing my eyes, I lay on my small cot as a huge smile cuts across my face. The sound and effect was much more powerful than I could have ever dreamed. I'm sure the screws' coffee cups spilled when the blast rocked the jail. Even the inmates are awakened from the shock.

The jerks have no idea about what's just happened. The screws are murmuring and many believe the miners blasting underground caused the powerful blast. Idiots. The mines have never caused such severe tremors to travel down the halls of this putrid hellhole.

Tossing my flannel blanket over my body, I sleep soundly without the aid of medication, satisfied the warden has received his message in a bomb. I wonder what the idiot is thinking now.

Loud banging of countless doors and the hustle and bustle announces the arrival of morning. I know my first priority of the day is to request to see the warden. I'm in much haste to see his stupid face and have carefully selected the words I'll use in my conversation with the tyrant. I don't think the idiot slept very well last night and I can't wait to see his blood shot eyes.

Chest filled with excitement, I accost the screw on duty and tell him to get me down to the dumb warden's office without delay. Burning my eyes into his, I feel he may suspect me already.

Not surprisingly, the warden is quick to respond to my demand to see him this morning. The atmosphere in his stinking jail is unlike all other boring and dull days. Nervousness and confusion is pasted on everyone's face and there's a real stir going on. The place is alive and there are vibes shooting through these concrete slabs for a change. There's a tension in the air and I love it. Even the cons are more excited than usual and it's very

obvious the administration is very anxious. I can smell the tension and fear. This is DYNOMITE.

Walking into the wardens' office, complete with handcuffs and escort, I smile broadly as I observe the extra security on hand. I'm delighted to see him fearful. Sitting behind his large desk, his face is sullen and withdrawn. The bastard is not his usual arrogant and disdainful self this morning. His ego has been stomped upon pretty badly.

The warden has a full house in his office this morning. There are four burly screws, the assistant warden, he and I cramped in his small office this wonderful morning. Sitting in his large leather chair, I wonder how well he slept last night.

Standing quietly inside his office, doors shut, I look him straight in the eye. I'm trying desperately to communicate my knowledge of his plight silently. Is the tyrant reading my eyes? Let me smile a little. There, that's better. He looks pretty tight-lipped today. Good. He knows.

Breaking the tense silence, the warden asks through painful eyes why I've chosen to see him today of all days. Now I'll transmit my knowledge and humble the rat.

Assuming an exaggerated air of arrogance like his, I look intently into his bulging eyes and demand four guys on my range by sundown. As his face registers shock and fear, I go on to name the guys by name. At this, the prick recoils back and I swear I can smell his cowardice.

Looking around the office, I stare every screw in the face trying to communicate the message that they're next if they dare say and do anything stupid. These idiots are immobile and paralyzed.

I'm earnest and serious and have a crazed look in my eye. My top lip is curled as a look of hatred burns my face. I glare and look at them with contempt.

Gathering his thoughts and straightening himself in his seat, the warden leans over on his desk, and asks me again why I've decided to see him this morning and make such a specific request. What the jerk is asking is what do I know about his poor little car. Does he think I'm going to confess openly? What a first class jerk.

In response to his stupid question, I lean slowly over and peer menacingly into his twisted face. Carefully placing the palms of my hands on his large wooden desk, I smile broadly, wink and turn to leave his office.

With these thoughts dancing in his mind, I'm escorted out of his office and returned to my range. Walking up the narrow stairs to my empty range, I demand the screws get me those guys in a hurry and without delay. The big burly characters who are usually quick to threaten me with the hole are unusually quiet this morning.

By sundown, I have the four men I asked for…

…I could instill terror and fear into their cold hearts then and will be capable of dastardly deeds once released in a few days time. I wouldn't be in this dark abyss of misery and torture if it weren't for that corrupt and sick warden back home. He's at the top of my hit list. My food slot opens, a brown paper bag is shoved inside and lands on the wet floor...

…They're huddled in the corner trying to keep warm by using their body heat…you want heat, I'll give you heat…pouring hot water down the pit, I throw my electrical cord in the pool…their bodies stiffen…shocks of electrical current pass through their jiggling carcasses…they're frying…I hit the off button on my generator and watch them slump heavily to the ground…now stay the hell away from one another…no more bullshit ok…

Chapter 19 / Calculating the Odds
(Flashback - Dead time - 1981)

A screw with wide football player shoulders and thick black handlebar moustache shows up at my cell door and advises me in a monotone voice that I've served my time in the hole. He quickly reminds me of six pending charges. I'll have to be moved to segregation to wait for the next session of kangaroo court. Sorry, but I'm not moving from my home. I've grown accustomed to this cave.

The burly behemoth shakes his big head and grimaces. He doesn't look very pleased. Exasperated, he goes on to say they need the room for other punitive cases. No way, I'll spare my brother in arms this hellish experience. I'm a noble savage, remember?

The screw leaves with a heavy sigh and I begin to wonder what they'll do. They don't understand why I don't want to leave the hole. Most guys jump at the opportunity but I've reached a point where I've accepted I'll do the rest of my time in the hole if I must. Even if they gate me. That would be a total of eighteen more months.

Moments later the shrink returns to my cell. Those dark eyes…are they yet filled with terror and fear?

The shrink, leaning over, peers through my food slot and observes me lying quietly on my steel cot. I'm stark naked, unshaven and don't care what he thinks.

Whose face is that looking on mine? You don't seem to be made of the same fabric of which my existence was woven. In fact, not even the San Francisco Bridge can succeed in joining your field of experience to my own. Surely, there's no way for me to muster enough willingness to begin our discussion.

Even before we speak, it's clear to me you wield the corrupt power to keep me in this cruel abyss. Furthermore, every experience with your ilk has proved bitterly disappointing and painful. You claim to be different but you share unshakeable bonds of commonality with all my jailers; you're not in my colours.

You say you require honesty from me in order to secure my physical release, yet you lie like a snake waiting to snare a mouse. How do I confide my inner most self with your kind without fear of being labelled some kind of homicidal maniac? It's true I frequently fantasize killing you as I lay awake at night. Scenes of slow torture play over in my mind.

The inherent antagonisms of our system prevent us from communicating at any level. You try to plant awareness but your credibility is nothing. I've been trained for years to distrust you and your frequent betrayals confirm our chasm.

Don't you know that your very presence confirms my deepest beliefs? You've built an infrastructure of misery and chaos with these jails and now expand upon it with shrinks and counsellors only to benefit yourselves. You don't care for me as you worry about my release and my plans.

Classed as my keepers, you can't assume two roles. Those who punish and subjugate me can't take any part in wanting to help me. The two extremes are irreconcilable.

I'm not saying a single word to that crackpot. The shrink looks expressionless and tries to read me. Want in my head doorknob? You'll be terrified to read me asshole. Don't you know I want to kill you? Do you realize how truly insane I am? The shrink is quiet and knows I'm not saying a word.

Look at what they're doing. How does this sit with your schooling and psychology texts? Is this rational and sane? Has this pulsating beast desensitized you as well?

Nobody can darken the doors of this infamous mechanical beast without turning into a raving maniac. Be it con, screw or lay people, we all become imbued by its monstrous dimensions. Its mad pestilence twists every channel of our minds. Can the doc feel himself slipping away? Is he aware of his own moral metamorphosis spiraling steadily into the land of the dead? Are you with me fiendish Freud?

Do you want to talk about high-risk factors? Do you want to discuss the ramifications of psychological immizeration? Can you see it before and within you? You're an embodiment of this systematic torture.

The nut looks away and I know they want to take me out of the hole. They're becoming afraid of what they've created. They can't handle it anymore. The doors are going to open wide in a few days. Where will you hide? Where will you go when I come for you?

The door to my dungeon slides open and clothes are set before my door. When did they mop the area? I must have slept for a few minutes. The piss and water is dry and gone. These assholes can be quiet when they want to.

I slide off my hard cot and decide to throw some warm clean clothes on. I'm yet cold and shivering. I'm going to segregation? Should I go? Maybe a little break will do me good.

The clothes feel good…I'm almost polished. I wonder what I look like for I've not seen my reflection in many weeks. Feeling my chin, I feel the hair. I wonder if its gray and dirty…I don't like to see my reflection anyway. I look so…so…different these days.

Is that little mouthpiece looking at me? I see his eyes in the crack of his door. Look at me kid because I'm your scariest nightmare. Do you see the ripples in my gut? Can you see the lines across my pectorals? Even my shoulders are striated and ripped. Yet these are a manifestation of the burning fury inside. My strength isn't physical, it's psychological. I feel no pain and have no fear. I'm fast and hit very hard.

I know some of the cons find the time very long down here but to me it's like my second home. I use it to get away from all of you. I don't like you but I'm solid. Don't give me a reason to fight with you. I'm on short time and you have respected and feared me for many years. I'm not bluffing anymore. You know what I could do. Do your time and I mine.

I always grant you respect and am always honest. I take none of your bullshit and trips. I was taught the codes and live by them religiously.

I'm being led down the narrow corridor past the door to the kangaroo court. Turning right, we head toward the door leading to segregation. I wonder who's locked up in segregation today. The door swings open and we walk by long rows of cells. I feel the eyes upon me but nobody utters a word. I know they've heard my fury in the past.

Stopping abruptly, the screw motions for the other in the bubble to crack open my new home. The door hums silently and I hesitate. Should I refuse again or should I stay? It would take a lot of effort to get me back to the hole.

I'll stay a few days and think of something to do. I'll have regular showers once every two days, yard for half an hour daily and even a radio. I have a blanket, pillow and mattress. This is luxury in the big house down below. Some cons even have televisions if on good behavior. I never get one.

I step into my cell and check the water faucet. Holy shit, cool running water. I flush my toilet and the damned thing works. Water, mattress, blankets, pillow, yard, clothes and showers. This is pretty grand. I can even get some writing instruments. I must write that letter for the guys in the hole. They'll be let out once I do this, even the little mouthpiece. Maybe he'll come to segregation if he feels brave enough. What will I do then? The parole hearing is scheduled soon also. I better call a damned lawyer.

I have to address a problem down here first. Lots on the damn mind. Too much. The guys in segregation are giving Lorne a hard time. A few are threatening to kill him. I know they're serious…

(1981)

> …My trial is scheduled to begin a few months down the road and things don't look very good. Despite that at my preliminary hearing, my first-degree murder charge is reduced to second-degree. Thus, I'm now facing life in prison with eligibility for parole after a minimum of ten years instead of twenty-five years. Not really a Godsend. Life in prison is a difficult prospect to face no matter if it's second or first degree murder. The whole ordeal is nightmarish.
>
> The drama of my quandary is having a strange effect on me. I can feel a part of myself being swallowed by the system with its many games and mentality, whereas another part desires to remain free. I'm being pulled into many different directions simultaneously.
>
> Another big question that remains at the forefront of my mind is: I want to suffer for what I did, but how much?
>
> Based on my fears and desire to remain free and avoid the harsh punishment I'm facing, I resort to devising an escape plan. Everything is coming to a head and the pressures mount daily. I decide that there's no way I could serve a ten to fourteen year sentence locked up like an animal. I'm prepared to accept five to seven years, and perhaps a flat ten-year sentence, but not life in prison. I can't imagine doing such an exorbitant amount of time. I'm only twenty years old. Killing is horrible, but it was an accident. I didn't mean to kill this man. It was a horrible and tragic mistake.
>
> The thought of escaping develops into a full-fledged escape plan. The plot is simple and sure to shake the foundation of the prison. It's a novel and daring plan that will catch the prison officials with their pants down. I'll escape from the most secure place the prison has to offer. Solitary confinement. My plan is laid out and is to be carried out if I receive a life sentence.
>
> Upon conviction of a second degree murder charge, I'll demand to be placed in solitary confinement under the guise of requiring quiet time. My request will be honored in light of the fear the prison administrators feel at this time. The cells in solitary confinement have what I perceive to be a security loop. The ceiling in one of the cells is not very secure.

In fact, the ceiling to one of the cells in solitary has a six by four foot opening fortified with a quarter inch steel screen. This thick wiry mesh screen is covered with a huge plastic dome to prevent the elements from pouring into the cell.

Although there's a camera in the hole, it presents no real problem, as I could either break the camera facing my cell, or cover my cell with my prison garb explaining I want to grieve and not be observed. I could also toss a wet wad of toilet paper at the eye of the camera as I've done many times before.

Being in the hole, I'll be in an excellent position to escape with some outside help. Help which I have. My older brother did agree to assist me in my time of need if the conviction proves too hard to bear. He'll climb to the roof of the prison with rope, cutting material and gun in hand. He'll cut through the plastic dome, remove the steel grate and drop the rope down to me. He'll leave the gun on the prison roof and park a stolen vehicle a few blocks down the street. The apartment will be rented for two months and be fully stocked with goods to last until the heat cools off. I'll also have access to a large collection of disguises at the apartment ready.

I have no doubt in my mind that if anyone dares to stop me from escaping, I'll blast a few bullets to their legs. I'm willing to die rather than go to prison for life.

Such is the escape plan and everything is prearranged months before my trial is to begin. I'm desperate and ready to do anything to get away from the harsh punishment I'm facing.

Days roll into weeks and weeks into months as the dreaded date nears. The charge is still second-degree murder and I'm not very optimistic of having it reduced to manslaughter. Everything looks dim. At this time, Merle Haggard comes out with his smash hit song "I turned twenty one in prison doing life without parole". As Merle sings his tune, I'm about to be enlightened by the system...

…Too bad Lorne can't escape this hellhole because these guys want his blood. They're thirsting psychos who need very little reason to bludgeon him to death. They set him up big time. His life is in grave danger. He's so damn naïve. He can't trust anybody, but I wonder if he'll trust me.

The boys in blue are the visible enemy but he can't see the other so well. Isn't Lorne aware of the old adage that goes "God save me from my friends as I can take care of my enemies on my own?" Open your eyes kid. His very life depends upon his awareness and intelligence in here. Violence and intelligence are great companions in here.

There are two immutable elements in the surrealistic world we live in. Hydrogen and stupidity. I possess fire and intelligence in my blood. I'm the new bomb and know my targets and enemies intimately.

Chapter 20 / Prison Preparations
(Flashback - Deal making - 1981)

Lorne knows so little about his environment. It's no wonder he's about to be killed. We're on our own in here. Who's taught him the law of the land? This isn't some petty reformatory. We've no friends and we can't trust anybody.

Why are the guys so patently stupid? You talk about your codes but who can live by them? I know what's right and wrong in here. I know the cleavage line. You don't label some guy a rat without some kind of proof lest you end up dead. Can't these guys see they're threatening Lorne's very life with those murderous rumors? I've seen the casualties around here.

The damaged body laid upon the cold hard floor. There it remained for several hours despite all eyes around. The body didn't stir all morning. It lay there motionless and lifeless as the prisoners milled about oblivious. The screws in their turrets didn't see it.

I witnessed the vicious attack. There were but the four of us in the gym that morning. Two assailants the victim and myself. The steel bar measuring six feet was used as a club and was swung with such force as to intend to kill. The other assailant picked up his similar weapon as the victim sprawled unconscious on the floor and smashed his prone body twice more. The thud resounded deafly into the silence as the assailants beat a hasty retreat. I was left sitting nearby in shock and horror. What had I just witnessed? I dashed from my position and came face to face with one of the unmasked assailants.

He escorted me about the yard for several minutes telling me the idiot had it coming. He was some kind of paedophile he said. I said nothing. I could show no emotion lest he believe I would tell the authorities. I would never tell a soul.

We sit in this madhouse and the fish don't know what to expect. Many tough and hardened cons wait for the day when they can remind the fish of the prevailing codes inside just as they were taught.

We must not complain, ask any questions at all and never ever show fear. We can never back down from a fight or point our finger. Never whistle. May you never utter friendly words to the screws or leave your cell to speak to the police. Never go to protective custody. Don't sit in anyone else's chair. Don't change channels on the television set unless you're ready to fight for the right to watch.

Don't put your nose into anybody's affairs. You see nothing, hear nothing and say nothing. Don't shed tears. Don't talk of rehabilitation. Never cheat at cards. Do what you say you'll do. Stay quiet and respect the others. Keep yourself fit and stay alert.

Don't peer into other people's cells. Never receive gifts from others. Don't gossip. Ask for nothing from anyone. Know your milieu and the players through observation and listening. Don't be part of any cliques. Never reveal your full intensity, nor full potential for survival.

I survive because my would-be assailants never know how far I'm willing to go if a fight ever breaks out. Some witnessed my fury from a distance and decided it wasn't worth taking a chance with me. I was lucky in many cases and of that I'm certain. I communicate well at their level and know how to read people. I stay by myself and try to respect everyone. However, respect is not always reciprocated. I know what to do in that case also. Kill or be killed.

My assailants are not sure they can beat me. They figure they'll have to kill me to ensure I won't retaliate. They'll need a very good reason for killing me wouldn't they? Not really. They need enough assurance they'll not be killed themselves in an attempt to take my life.

Their reasons for killing will vary according to their values and beliefs. However, most require very little reason to try and kill. Hurt pride and one bad word has been known to cause severe blood letting.

I've seen the games from both sides of the fence. Those stupid mindless games…life has no value. It's all based on revenge, retribution and punishment…it's cold, callous and calculating. Screw or con, judge or lawyer and crown…it all boils down to crime and punishment. The laws and codes are so varied and plentiful but they all want revenge…

(1981)

> …The attorneys, in their usual coldness, are trying to impose a term of imprisonment on me based on what they perceive to be the value of my victim life's. It's a crude bargaining process reeking of callousness.
>
> As for myself, I understand I have to pay for what I did, but I won't pay for something the law said I didn't do. I certainly didn't intend to kill anyone. Therefore, how could the lawyers say a ten or seven year sentence is worth the life of another? I killed a man and now they say a ten or twenty year sentence evens the score? I could serve a hundred years and never make book for that tragedy.
>
> I fire my first lawyer and set my eyes on out of town lawyers to handle my case. I've read the statutes and know I fit the manslaughter criteria.
>
> My search for an out of town lawyer meets with severe opposition from the legal aid office. I'm told in no uncertain terms that they won't pay for out of town lawyers and that I'll have to find lawyers in town to handle my case.
>
> I don't feel I could receive fair and just treatment from local lawyers because of their tendency to exchange favors with the crown's office. I could be sold out and counted on as a favor later. I won't be railroaded. Thus, with my trial fast approaching, the pressure mounts. I become extremely agitated, feel cornered and very anxious. What could I do?
>
> With no other recourse, I tell the legal aid director the police will have to drag me into court if they won't honor my request to fund an out of town lawyer. I would have to be dragged into court screaming and fighting all the way. I'll disrupt the proceedings and have to be ejected from the courtroom. I'll shout the fact a travesty of justice is being perpetrated and that I'm being sold out. I'll lash out and strike out at anyone within distance.
>
> I'll also request a change of venue and motion to have my trial held in French. I'll use up the taxpayers dollars while screaming injustice all the way. The media will have a field day with my antics and I'll look at an insanity plea as well.
>
> In light of my threats, the legal aid director accepts my wishes and nothing more is said about the selection of my lawyer. I feel my constitutional rights have been respected and not compromised over fiscal considerations. I also believe I've avoided a diabolical plan to sell me out by local lawyers.

Moreover, I could abandon my escape plan. The way I see it is why should I escape via violence if I could escape via intelligence?

With victory, I begin to call some of the biggest names in the legal profession. I talk to Ed Greenspan and Clayton Ruby but none will accept legal aid payment. After many days and countless calls, I'm referred to a London lawyer who's handled a case for a guy currently locked up in the local jail. The lawyer did a good job in pleading this man's case and thus I want an opportunity to size him up. This lawyer, Fletcher Dawson, agrees to see me that very week.

Arriving at the jail, I see my man is young, eager and intelligent. With short blond hair crowning a thin face and long jaw-line, I look into his clear blue eyes and sense immediately I could trust him by the way he discusses the possibilities with me. The young advocate tells me my options are wide open. I like that.

Discussing the case briefly, he indicates he'll return to see me in two weeks. The trial is scheduled to begin in a month and a half.

The two weeks pass and my lawyer returns with the assurance he could get me a seven-year sentence on a manslaughter conviction. I figure he's doing a fine job since this spells a possible release after fourteen months on good behavior. Sure beats the second degree murder sentence advanced and proposed by the local cronies.

Encouraged, I decide to bargain a little more and ask my lawyer to see the crown attorney and ask for a three-year deal, to wit I'll readily plead guilty. The young attorney is doubtful and leaves with head shaking in exasperation. Returning a week later, he has an offer of five years on the table. The game is on.

A quick mental calculation reveals a five year sentence marks a parole date after ten months if I receive a full parole. Not bad, but I want three years now. I sense the crown attorney has a weak case if he's willing to offer such numbers.

Two weeks later and about a month before my trial is scheduled to begin, the young lawyer advises me I'll either accept the five-year deal or be tried for second-degree murder. I tell him I'll take a week to think about it.

Ten days later, and about two weeks before trial, I advise my lawyer I'm prepared to plead guilty to manslaughter and a five-year sentence on one condition. The condition being everyone sign the agreement, lest someone back out at the last minute. I want the judge, crown attorney, lawyer and myself to write an agreement on the terms of the deal.

Now the young lawyer is flabbergasted and exasperated with me. He says that such an agreement is unprecedented, illegal and unethical. As far as I'm concerned, I really don't care about ethics. Judges occasionally refuse to accept joint submissions and I don't want to be part of that percentage. I want everyone's signature on the deal or else I'll go forward with the trial. I'll revive my escape plan and implement the strategies for trial.

I tell the lawyer about the trial strategies but not the escape plan. The young lawyer is marveled and astounded by my intentions. Leaving the jail with despair written all over his face, he says he'll see what he can do, but seriously doubts anyone will consider such an asinine proposal. He figures he'll have to ask for a new trial date if my offer is refused because he's not prepared to proceed with the trial. That's not a problem in my eyes since I must sit around anyway.

A week before the trial is to begin, my young lawyer appears at the jail with legal size paper in hand. He swears me to secrecy as he pulls out a large legal size sheaf of paper from a brown manila envelope. I peruse the paper and see inscribed therein three signatories. One belongs to the judge, the other to the crown and the third to my lawyer. The only signature required is mine. I'm asked to sign and keep this oath of secrecy for all time, and produce it only if the deal backfires. All the players are in agreement and nothing is left for me to do but sign on the dotted line. I sign my name and keep a copy for myself as I stride in disbelief to my range…

…Cursing and issuing threats, the guys in seg are asking Lorne to come out in the yard and clear his name. Holy Mack, they want him bad. These guys are thirsting for blood. However, does anyone have proof of their allegations? I don't think they do, so they better shut their fat traps. Nobody gets to Lorne but through me.

I know some of these guys have killed before but what am I going to do? I can't let them treat this guy this way without proof. Enough is enough. I'll fight with them if they give me no choice. Two hundred and fifty pounds of muscle is nothing to me if they can't use it wisely. Further, I have the right of conviction and the might of right on my side. I'm following the codes but these guys are being immature and exhibit the mentality of reformatory boys. This is Millhaven and it has a mentality of its own.

Yelling down the length of the range through my cell door, I advise Lorne not to worry. I tell him nobody is going to touch him in the yard. He has the right to tell his side of the story and I want to hear it.

I hear mumbling and ask who it is. It's the big guns from the special handling unit. He and his murderous partner are fuelling the masses. The blood thirsting psychos are persuaded by their reputation. As far as I'm concerned, that's just too bad. Nobody rides on reputation alone in here. They better show adherence to the codes or die by them.

I've had enough of this shit house and the underhanded duplicity from both sides. I know their true colours. They pick on the weak like a pack of wolves. When is the last time they fought head to head without weapons, without sneaking cowardly behind someone? Anybody can stick a dirty knife in another's back but how many can kill with their bare hands in a face to face battle?

Yelling down the length of the narrow range, I tell Lorne to come out to the yard and talk to me. If he lies, I'll take him out. I won't need anybody's help and he knows that. If he's innocent, he'll come out.

Lorne says he doesn't trust anybody anymore. Good, he's doing very well but what about principle? Deathly silence follows…

...Peering into the makeshift prison, I toss a cup of acid on the fat copper's hairy back. Sitting bolt upright with shock registered on his fat bulbous face, the purple veins from his

alcoholic nose are about to burst. Smoke begins to smolder as his voice chokes in excruciating pain. What a blast. Screw him and his slinking ilk.

You should have never punked me off. This is nothing. Wait till I take you and your friends out for a ride later. Boy, are you going to suffer with that trip.

The judge is slinking around like a damn walrus. Maybe I should take him out and give him a few good shots in the face. Crack his nose and break his filthy jaw.

I can feel the hate burning in my stomach as it rests in my gut like a football. It rises to my throat and spews forth like a damned volcano. I feel like a raving lunatic and tornado. Being insane and mad is not such a bad trip. It's actually a lot of fun.

Chapter 21 / D-Day
(Flashback - Judgement - 1982)

Silence, everyone is silent and I know Lorne is struggling with the thought of trusting me. We were neighbors on the same range and spoke frequently. I allowed him to come in my cell and talk to me a few times. Not many cons have come into my cell for rap sessions, so he better not mess around with me now. The word is out and he'll never survive. I'm putting my neck out for him.

I'm not like the rest of the guys down here. I must have proof; I give a man the benefit of the doubt before pronouncing him guilty in my mind. The nuts in here are just like the system they hate. The presumption of innocence is invalid. Similarity breeds contempt.

Pacing, my anger begins to mount. I've never seen these loud mouths but have heard of them. They stabbed a guy and killed him for some stupid reason of which I'm unclear. They like to kill. That's what they like to do. I'm sure they don't like being hurt. They have seen what happens when a man squirms and flinches on the ground. That could very well happen to them. I'm not afraid of these damn goons.

I better stretch and limber up a little. Loosen out the neck muscles and get ready to roll with the blows. I'm going to kick, punch, bite, tear and poke. I'll slam my fists, feet, elbows and knees into their bodies. I'll even head butt the jerks if they grab me. I'll tear their scrotum, poke their eyes out and bite their faces. They deliver a verdict in the absence of proof…

(1982)

> …My trial date converted to a sentencing date finally arrives after eight long months of waiting under conditions best described as insane and educational. The school of hard knocks has taught me another dimension of life and now I'm going to meet up with the acid test.
>
> Cuffed, I'm escorted to the courthouse through the infamous subterranean tunnel and placed in the very same prisoner's box I was in eight months prior. Only this time, I'm not facing twenty-five years but rather twenty-five months.
>
> There are many people in court for my sentencing. The press has been unusually quiet about the proceedings but some people have taken an

interest in the case. There's a classroom of young students present and several other interested citizens including my family.

As for myself, I feel reasonably secure I'll receive the five-year deal. This will result in my being transferred to a minimum-security penitentiary where I'll eventually be released on parole in probably twenty months.

Since it's my first bit in the federal system and since it's an accident that brought me to this point, I figure the authorities will see the situation as I do.

My musing is interrupted when the court clerk announces the judge's entry into the courtroom. The play is about to unfold. All the actors have read their scripts and I hope nobody forgets their lines. The lead player, the judge, begins to speak…(the actual sentencing transcript follows):

"The accused has been charged with the offence of second degree murder as a result of the death of one, …… …… …… on or about the 13th day of May, 1981, at the City of Sudbury.

On arraignment, the accused pleaded not guilty to the offence as charged, namely second degree murder, but tendered a plea of guilty to the included offence of manslaughter. The Crown consented to the acceptance of this plea to the lesser offence of manslaughter.

The accused met the deceased …… at the Coulson Hotel in the City of Sudbury at approximately 8:00 p.m. of the night in question. The accused was present with the deceased until approximately midnight, during which period of time they were obviously consuming alcoholic beverages. The deceased, at some time near or about midnight, went to the registration desk of the hotel and rented a room, apparently in his name, following which the deceased and the accused went to that room. There's evidence that in the room the deceased, who from the evidence was of homosexual tendencies, made a homosexual advance upon the accused, as a result of which there was a physical altercation between the two of them.

The cause of death as given by the pathologist at the autopsy was edema secondary to traumatic head injuries.

He also states that a contributing cause of death was the acute alcoholic intoxication of the deceased at the time of his death.

The Crown gave brief reasons for consenting to the acceptance of the plea of guilty to manslaughter, with which reasons I entirely agree. There's substantial evidence that the deceased was robbed at some time, but the evidence is not conclusive that the accused was the perpetrator of the robbery. The evidence of robbery appeared in the turned-out lining of the pockets of the deceased, the folder of his wallet lying on the bed, and the absence of any money, as I understand the evidence. In any event, I'm perfectly satisfied that there's no way in which the Crown could have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that this accused robbed the deceased, or that robbery was in any way the motivation on the part of the accused for this death of the deceased. It was on the basis of the consumption of alcohol, and the evidence of provocation, which the jury would have to very carefully consider, that I decided that the appropriate offence was

manslaughter and not second degree murder, and I therefore entered a conviction against this accused for the offence of manslaughter. The maximum penalty to which the accused is liable of for manslaughter is imprisonment for life.

I now turn to some of the matters that I must take into account in determining what is the appropriate sentence for this offence of manslaughter.

The accused was born August 3rd, 1960 so that he was 20 years of age at the time of this offence and he's now 21 years of age. He has been in custody since May the 13th, 1981, which is a period of almost eight months. This period of pre-trial confinement must of course, be taken into account in determining what is an appropriate sentence. The fact that the accused has entered a plea of guilty to the offence of manslaughter has thereby obviated the necessity of a trial and is also a factor to be taken into account in his favor. On the other hand the accused has been convicted of ten offences, exclusive of this conviction for manslaughter, between December 29th, 1976, at which time he was just slightly over the age of 16 years, and March 25th, 1981, at which time he was 20 years of age.

Just summarizing very briefly the nature of those convictions, they included a conviction for fraud, mischief to private property, causing a disturbance, trafficking in a controlled drug, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, a breach of recognizance, causing a disturbance, and failure to appear, causing a disturbance, assault occasioning actual bodily harm and theft over $200. No one of those convictions alone is of an extremely serious nature, but taken as a whole they indicate a complete disregard of the law by this accused, and a lifestyle that was bound to lead to something very serious as he has now encountered.

The report of Doctor Racinskas, which has been filed as exhibit 4 in these proceedings, provides what I perceive to be a proper assessment of this accused, when he reports as follows:

'Personality testing reveals him to be a character disorder. He's likely to be seen as lacking insight into his own motivations, egocentric, shallow, and of having difficulty forming long-term meaningful relationships. Such persons typically show a lack of deep, emotional response, inability to profit from past experience, inability to plan ahead, and a reckless disregard for the consequences of their behavior. The lack of social conformity and a persistent tendency to get into difficulties with the law are characteristic, along with a history of alcohol abuse and sexual acting out. Such individuals demonstrate an unusually high threshold and tolerance for punishment, such that punitive measures have negligible impact in redirecting their behavior. He's quite likely to make a good initial impression, but the moodiness and resentment over time is likely to undo that impression.

There was no evidence of psychosis nor strong aggressive or hostile themes that would suggest that he's dangerous.

It appears then, that in the incident in question, his degree of impairment to alcohol, combined with a typical poor evaluation for the consequences of his behavior, led to his beating the man more than he had anticipated.

As you know, traditional psychiatric intervention with such individuals has been extremely disappointing, and one could therefore anticipate that he similarly would gain little benefit. A fundamental impediment to such intervention is that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to form a trusting psychotherapeutic relationship with him. A structured rehabilitation environment would seem to be the best course of action.'

In summary, I must on the one hand take into account the youth of the accused, his plea of guilty, and the time he has already spent in custody. On the other hand I must keep in mind that the fundamental purpose of sentencing is the protection of society. To that end the sentence that I impose should act especially as a deterrent to this accused, and at the same time provide a structured rehabilitation environment for him. Penal sanctions in the past have not been effective in altering the conduct of this accused and one can only hope that this further opportunity for rehabilitation of the accused will bear fruit. It's entirely up to the accused and no one else whether or not that proves to be the case.

Both counsel for the Crown and counsel for the accused have suggested the appropriate penalty for this accused for this offence is a term of imprisonment for five years. Although I always appreciate the assistance of counsel in this regard, I of course, am not bound in any way by their views.

In this case however, I believe that a sentence of five years is the appropriate sentence, and I therefore impose it as a result of my own consideration of all of the factors which I'm in law bound to consider. The sentence of the Court is therefore imprisonment for five years.

I may say that I would think that the parole authorities, if they're to consider a mitigation, or lessening of the sentence of this accused, would want to be looking for a very substantial and persuasive change in attitude and conduct on his part during his term of confinement. It's often said that individuals are at the crossroads in their life. I wouldn't think that there's a more glaring example of a person who's in that position than this accused today. Should he ever return to Court with a conviction for a very serious offence there would really be very little that could be said on his behalf to mitigate the results of his conduct.

I should also state in conclusion that both counsel for the accused and counsel for the Crown have stated to me that they don't believe that a Presentence Report would be of any assistance to me. Having listened very carefully to the evidence and the very able submissions of counsel for the Crown and for the accused, I agree with those views. Mr. Dube I may say sir that you have been very well represented in these proceedings, and if you don't understand and appreciate that, the next time that you stand up and have to look a Judge in the eye I don't think he'll be as considerate as I have been of your situation today…"

…Tell me doc, what do you think about sharing your personal experience with Hell? You have not been able to up to this point have you? Perhaps you'll be able to identify with your client base now. Have you not been born with a silver spoon in your mouth? Come from a good home do you? Healthy family dynamics and the material benefits as well? Discipline at home and good values instilled? Yes? Tools to render wise decisions and all? Avoided the alcohol and other drug pitfall? Was it luck or wisdom asshole? Don't talk to me about your famous evaluation criteria jerk-off…trying to stereotype me again. Would you say I'm detaching from reality as a defence mechanism now? Who wouldn't under such sickly dynamics? I don't have my drugs to detach right now? You rather pump me full of pills because we can't bridge our field of experience…you have failed to keep yourself objective because of your value judgements on me…you're afraid and don't care why I do what I do. I'm a societal write off in your biased eyes…you prefer to keep me locked up and fail to intervene. Your own inadequacy breeds this insane seeding ground…you're part of the problem…blame me do you? You're a sick bastard…

Take this bug juice…chlorohydrate should help you sleep better…you'll feel better in the morning…just numb out some more. I want you to write me a twenty-five thousand word essay on the pros and cons of intervention and create a model for primary, secondary and tertiary intervention for ex cons. Re-evaluate your own approach and take a good look at yourself…give your profession a whole new perspective…what's the best way to intervene and help? Is incarceration a panacea? Take another look at where you are idiot. I think you're in denial…

…The cell doors open wide and the guys are led to the 40 by 25 feet fenced-in yard of segregation. The twenty-foot barbed-wired fence is overlooked by a single tower, as nine to eleven guys mill about casually. Lorne has come outside. He looks very nervous.

Striding over to Lorne's side, I'm convinced more than ever he's not suited for this madhouse. I know he comes from a good home with good values. His parents are well off but he got lazy and tried to cut corners. The guy didn't want to work or go to school, so he went and sold dope instead. He's just a greedy dope pusher and a party animal. He got in with the wrong crowd on the street and again in here, and he can't adapt to this environment. There are a few like him around here. They usually die or get taken out in a stretcher.

He's not very big at five feet nine. Weighing in at 165 pounds, he certainly doesn't look like he can defend himself very well. His innocent features have not been darkened by the kill or be killed mentality; it has not consumed him yet. Timid and reserved, he's the perfect target. A loner with no willingness to kill and take it to the limit is prime prey around here. He's also a short timer and a little naïve sometimes.

He thinks this place is like the subculture on the streets. He's sadly mistaken. A dope conviction but no violence on his rap sheet. He went and dealt drugs inside this hellhole. Bad move. Too many killings revolve around drugs in here. God knows what channel he used to get the stuff inside this pit, but it sure put his life in danger now. Probably got some cash brought through the visiting room from one of his visitors and stuffed the bundle up his ass. He went and gave his money to others, who did the same with his drugs. The drugs never got to him though.

Beginning to speak, Lorne explains he's been ripped off for a few ounces of hash and that the guys responsible for the rip off wrote a letter to the administration saying his life was in danger. The administration thus locked him up in segregation for his own protection. The guys manipulated the administration to cover up their wrongdoing.

I'm pumped. I've seen the dangers associated with these kinds of games before. Word gets around very quick about rumors. Rumors that can get an innocent man killed. Word travels very fast and very far in this small prison community. The kid is not safe anywhere anymore

until the issue is resolved. He has to get back to the main compound and get those guys but the administration won't permit it. He's in a catch 22. He's on short time as well which doesn't help his cause. The guys know how to pick their targets. They're crazy but not stupid. The most dangerous guys are those who have a combination of intelligence and violence.

Scanning the yard, I see the psychos lurking and observing us. I feel their eyes burn my back and can smell their blood thirsting need. I'm the only thing between death and life for Lorne. Looking back over to Lorne, I ask him to tell me who did this and how it went down. I want to know who the finks are and I'll find a way to get to them somehow.

Rick and Joey in the far corner of the yard are going to the SHU because they bludgeoned a guy to death a few months ago. They want his ass and are friendly with his enemies. Lorne is trapped and caught. They're fuelling the masses and are looking for some justification to kill Lorne without repercussions from the others.

Lorne is petrified as his blue eyes search the yard in paranoia. Loosening the zipper on his green jacket, he says he's ready to tackle anyone who'll stick their nose in his business. Pulling a cigarette from his right jacket pocket, he lights up and draws a long drag. The kid has no clue what he's talking about. Nobody, I mean nobody is going to just come up and slug it out. In fact, they could pull out some hardware any minute and start bludgeoning us to death.

Beware Lorne, this is not some reformatory or some of the rock 'n roll taverns back home. I know these guys want to drive it right through you. How do I know that? Because you're thinking violence.

Rubbing his tattooed hand over his blond hairy chin, Lorne wonders what he can do now.

Chapter 22 / Signed, Sealed and Delivered
(Flashbacks - Enemies on both sides - 1985 & 1982)

Looking away from Lorne and scanning the many menacing faces, I begin to wonder how I'll straighten this mess up. Once the word leaks out, it's practically impossible to erase the doubt that festers. And doubt is all these crazed cons need to ram a knife in a back.

I can't let Lorne deal with these double-dealing, manipulating underhanded killers alone. They've breached the codes and must taste joint justice for themselves. I think I can count on calling in a few veterans. I have my network and these guys are very earnest and serious. We have an agreement. Many moons ago we agreed to keep a loose affiliation and not hang around each other too often lest others recognize our bond. We agreed a long time ago to call on each other if ever the odds proved to be dangerous and overwhelming. Yes, I have my safety net and nobody knows. That's the best way to operate around here.

My friends will be more than happy to rectify this problem with me. We'll confront these finks and see how smug and smart they think they are. They're done and cooked. They're going to get hurt and badly. Death could result.

Mike, Franky and Alex are feared and respected around here. Nobody, I mean nobody messes with these guys. They respect everyone, keep a low profile and embrace the codes. I'm lucky and pleased to have made a pact with them. The need to call on each other has never arisen until now. There has been such a serious breach of the codes this time, I have to call my allies.

I like to help the underdog and have done things like this on my own countless times before. I ensure the codes are adhered too. I've been doing this for years.

If anyone wants a piece of Lorne, I challenge them to come and get him, but not before they can prove what they're saying. Lorne is not a rat. He has been set up by a bunch of low life cowards. If these blood-thirsting nuts want to involve themselves in this murderous plot, then I say they're collaborators and have benefited.

Looking at me with surprise, Lorne says I shouldn't get involved as I too am on short time, and that in any case, he'll take care of these rotten bastards himself one day. One day. Today man, it can't wait. What about reputation? This will follow him wherever he goes. He can't hide from such things in prison. People can get him anywhere, anytime and when he least expects it…

(1985)

> …My buddy Bob in Kent Penitentiary is beat up so viciously one day, I barely recognize him at lunch in the dining room. Some muscle bound kid pummeled him half to death for no apparent reason, except perhaps envy and jealousy as his motive. Shocked and angered over the incident, I know Bob never bothers a soul. His face swollen, black and blue bruises mark his face.

Bob tells me the muscle bound kid strode into his cell and started swinging without warning. The first blow felled Bob. He was almost put unconscious on the first shot but the kid kept swinging.

Infuriated, I storm out of the dining area and wait for the assailant in the cloister. The pugnacious little brigand will be made to taste his own brand of violence. Nobody beats up my friends for nothing.

The blond-haired muscle bound kid is walking out in the cloister with a few of his buddies. He looks cocky and sure of himself. Barrel chest with thick arms swinging at his sides, the kid struts like Rocky.

Striding casually over, our eyes meet. The punk has no fear and looks like he's getting ready for a fight. No problem punk. He says something to his friends and looking over to me, they walk away.

The kid stands sideways and begins to loosen out his neck muscles. His big head twists from side to side as he stretches his bulging pectorals under a tight fitting white muscle shirt. He's a big kid weighing in at approximately one hundred and eighty pounds of rock hard muscle spread on a five foot nine inch frame. But is he a fighter or just a big body builder? I'll find out soon.

I feel calm. I'll see what happens once we get into it. I'm within a few feet of his expanded chest now. My fists are clenched and my arms feel strong. The running shoes are tight and my breathing smooth. The air is fresh and cool and the sun helps to keep my muscles loose. The shoulders relax and the stomach tightens a little.

The muscle bound kid begins to tighten up as the veins on his inflated biceps appear and spread a web across his shoulders and expanded chest. Resting my eyes on his chest, I can see his hands and feet very well.

The kid remains motionless. I wish the little punk would say something. I'm waiting for him to open-up his fat mouth before I slam him and break his jaw. But the kid is silent and won't move an inch. I can feel his friends looking at me but they're not moving either. Quiet, the situation is getting very tense. I'm getting excited and anxious for the kid to say something or move.

He knows what this is all about. He knows there's no need for words. The kid has been around for awhile. He's experienced. Maybe I have a good fight coming after all. I've never been beaten before and I don't feel like losing today. He'll have to work very hard and be very fast to beat me. It will be hard.

He may not be too easy to knock out himself. I wish he would say something or move. Nothing...not even a twitch. He's experienced.

The stout soldier of mania should have never hit my friend. He even tried to interfere in a hockey game scuffle I got into last week. Maybe he beat my friend thinking I'm afraid of him.

Anger surfaces with these thoughts and I feel the heat burn my face. Screw it, I'll initiate something. Feigning a left jab, he moves backward and shifting his weight, he moves back in with a right hand. The idiot is way too slow. Stepping into his motion, I shoot out a solid right hand of my own.

The impact is vicious. The kid's head snaps back as my fist crashes into his contorted face. He's going down already.

Eyes rolling in his head, he looks dazed and out of focus. Twirling quickly, I slam him with a vicious left hook and watch his feet leave the ground. His head slams into the concrete wall as he falls heavily to the ground. The kid is unconscious and hurt badly.

Kneeling atop his crumpled body, I slap him open handed a few times on the sides of his big head to wake him up. He's snapping out of his daze a little. Can the punk hear me? His eyes are straining to focus. I tell the punk I'll finish him off right here for keeps. He looks into the distance.

I slap him a few more times and he mumbles something. He can hear me. I ask him if it's over or do I have to kill him right here and now because I don't care about anything right now. The kid says nothing. I want to know if this is over or do I finish him here? I mean it and he had better answer me right now.

He mumbles that it's over.

I go on to warn him to never come within ten feet of me, lest I take him out without warning. He nods in agreement.

Standing now, I watch him stumble to his feet. He's shaky and needs the support of the wall to hold himself. He's walking toward the cellblocks in a haze but turns for the dining room. Dizzily, he turns one last time toward the infirmary. I know something is broken but don't know what.

I see him five days later with wires in his jaw. He asks if he could come within ten feet and talk to me. I allow it. He apologizes and says he messed up…

…Lorne looks surprised and realizes probably for the first time the seriousness of his situation. The sun beating down on his sullen features, the kid shakes his head in despair. He decides he'll get transferred to a medium and get paroled from there.

I go on to explain this is only half the battle; that there are the screws and administration to contend with as well…

(1982)

…Sitting in my cell, I reflect on the lesson I just learned about the administration of crime and punishment. There's a lot more to it than meets the eye. A part of me also feels privileged to participate in such a duplicitous aspect of our system. This day of discovery revealed why these lawyers, crown attorneys and judges are so rich. These charlatans deceive and scam professionally as consummate con men themselves. I begin to look at the cons with distrust and see them as being naïve of the world they live in. How could they be so oblivious to human nature?

With my deal now fully sealed, my escape plan is abandoned. I figure I'll be paroled in approximately two years. I have all my time calculated with mathematical exactness. I figure I'll begin serving my sentence in a minimum-security facility and quickly cascade to a camp, and from camp to a halfway house, and right unto the street again. I will avoid losing as much good time as possible but do factor into my calculation some additional time for occasional mishaps.

Despite my mental calculations and my desire to be released as soon as possible, another thought is running parallel in my thought plane. I feel deep guilt for what I've done. I feel I'm not being punished sufficiently for the crime I've committed and want to suffer in prison. I want to serve hard time and want to experience the pain and suffering the system inflicts. I've mixed feelings and thoughts about the entire deal. I should be punished severely and the five years doesn't seem sufficient.

What if I walk out of prison in fifteen or twenty months? That's not a harsh enough punishment is it? I don't think it is. I'm really confused. I must atone for the life I've taken, accident or not. Murder is murder and my victim is gone for keeps. The courts could call it manslaughter, but to me it's the same. I wish I could exchange my life for his but…

I picture the funeral procession and my victim's weeping family members. I hope they forgive me some day. I didn't mean to kill him. How could it have happened?

I'm called to see the classification officer and he determines where I'll begin serving my sentence. This guy assesses me in less than two minutes. He says I'm a candidate for Collins Bay located in Kingston. I'm asked to sign my waiver of appeal and be prepared for transfer in under thirty days.

Leaving his office, I'm shocked and dismayed at the news I'm not to begin at a minimum-security, because as the classification officer said, I'm convicted of a serious offence and have a record of violent offences against others. Property offences are not viewed in the same light.

I'm going to the penitentiary now and that's completely novel for me. Court is not new except for the side I've just experienced, but the pen is another dark world I know nothing about. What I thought I knew, I did not know not at all, and what I do not know at all, I could only dare imagine.

If I say I'm not scared, I'll be lying to myself. The prospect of having to rub shoulders with some of Canada's most feared and notorious cons is terrifying. I know people are killed in those places for saying a wrong word. Dealing with the authorities and dealing with the cons are two separate matters. And if what I've just seen, felt and smelled means anything at all, it means I'm a greenhorn at best. Even the most hardened criminals have not experienced what I've just been through. The young lawyer even learned a few lessons in jurisprudence along with me.

To make matters more serious, I receive bad news from the street. Apparently there are some people on the street who are going to issue a contract to have me killed in prison over a drug rip-off my brother pulled. The victims of the rip-off believe I'm the guy they want and not my brother. It's a large rip off and some hit men from Toronto have been summoned to take care of the matter. It's a lot of money. I imagine many cons will gladly take up the contract and try to kill me when I arrive. The threat is real and I feel very nervous about it.

Only a month before my incarceration, hit men made the front page of our newspaper for an event that occurred when they tried to kill my brother and me. We almost got caught up in a fusillade of bullets over this rip off…

I'm called out of my range and told I'm being transferred. As two burly screws escort me from my range to the basement, I'm stopped by the warden on the main floor. The warden, standing in his ugly brown suit and thick black glasses, says he wants to speak to me about something. Surrounded by his puppet cronies, the warden stands arrogantly and sneers. Hatred burning in his eyes, his mouth curls in disgust. This tyrant advises me that wherever I go, I'll have problems. The militant authoritarian is telling me he has sent word to his crony friends in Collins Bay. He is issuing out a personal vendetta.

I react violently as deep-seated hatred and resentment overtake me. The hatred consumes me with such force that I want nothing more than to slug him and rip his face off at the seams. I'm filled with contempt and fury. I let go of a huge glob of phlegm in his face and tell him I'll come out alive only to see him die. I mean every word I say and plan to carry it out. The screws yank me away and rush me downstairs for the waiting bailiffs.

What the hell am I going to do when faced with the deadly reality of my plight in Collins Bay? Hit men, vendettas…shit…will I survive…?

…The gun totting screw in his turret indicates time is up for exercise. I'm pleased nobody has said a word or made a move against Lorne. I believe he'll be safe but only as long as I remain in seg. These guys will come back and kill him when I leave and I know it. Lorne better not go back to the yard when I leave. It's much wiser and safer to finish off his last four months in isolation and go home and stay out of jail for keeps. If he makes it to Joyceville or Collins Bay, the word will follow him there. The labels follow you across the country and remain forever.

He should have tackled the guys in seg but he has no real guts. However, that does not mean he deserves to die unjustly. I'll not tolerate murder of the innocent. These are the codes and everyone must conform lest it turn on them like a double-edged sword. The real culprits and violators of the codes are yet in the main compound. Probably smoking Lorne's dope. I know these idiots. I'll turn them against each other. I'll confront them if I get out of the hole and seg. I'll find out who sent the letter to administration. That guy is a rat.

Chapter 23 / First Impressions
(Flashback - Millhaven - 1982)

The warden's thick black rimmed glasses, crooked on his bloodied nose, winces in pain and his eyes plead in earnest pity. Did you not carryout your personal vendetta against me dog face? I had to contend with your cronies for seven long years. 400 days in the hole, no parole and no privileges at all. Even my child had to be abandoned because I couldn't guarantee I would be coming out alive.

I was sent in the valley of death among the callous, the psychos, the criminally insane, the…the blood thirsting nuts. Your puppet soldiers mastered the head games. They drove me crazy, and now I show you your creativity. I despise everything you stand for. You like to power trip don't you? A little dynamite under your car palls in comparison to seven long years of hellish torture, provocation and constant antagonism. I owe you a few…your eyes are dead…

(1982)

…Shackled and cuffed like I'm some raving lunatic, the sheriffs lead me cautiously into a long green corrections bus fortified with barred windows with a greenish mirrored tint. Weaving carefully through the "goose" as the guys like to call it, I glance at the many sullen faces. A dozen cons are seated on thin blue seats, shackled at the ankles and securely cuffed.

My leg irons make walking difficult as I shuffle and sit beside a gargantuan species weighing no less than two hundred and thirty pounds of rock solid muscle. Still infuriated with the warden, every muscle in my body is tense. My face taut with tension and hatred, I look blankly at my giant neighbor.

The big bear nods his giant head and asks me what's going on. He's very agitated himself and only too eager to get involved. Without answering, I shake my head, slide upright in my hard seat and stare straight ahead.

Everyone sits in silence waiting for the goose to lurch forward that will take us to various prisons across the province. Probably a few cases for Millbrook, Monteith, Maplehurst, Guelph and maybe a few pen-timers.

Sitting quietly, the scene with the warden is playing in my mind. The maniac thinks he's going to make me shake rough time. I know he's serious. He should have let the guys up on the range when I asked him politely. He started the ball rolling. His car was blown up but when I get out, he's going to be dead meat.

The bus engine roars loudly as we begin moving away from the prison. Images dance through my mind, when driving through my old city, I catch last glimpses of my old stomping grounds. We drive by the legal aid clinic where the police apprehended me eight months before. The scenes of my girlfriend, who had been stunned and shocked, haunt me. These memories hit me hard.

Picking up speed, the goose lurches by the President Hotel. The many fight scenes flash in my mind's eye. The cops whisked me out of that establishment at least four times in the preceding years. That little

mouthpiece fell hard in the men's washroom that one night. I shattered his jaw with one good shot.

Braking at the lights in the center of town, I stare at the many rounders standing around waiting to rip someone off, or secure enough black market goods to get drunk and stoned that evening. I don't recognize any of my old-drinking buddies. The others don't have to worry about my crashing their party or smashing my fists into their drunken distorted faces.

The fight scenes were brutal. Two guys in comas, one almost blinded and others sent by ambulance to the hospital barely conscious. Nothing more than human punching bags.

Rolling down the highway, my big neighbor begins to speak. He introduces himself as Ross and tells me he's from Sault St. Marie. I learn that he too is serving a five-year sentence and that he too is heading for Collins Bay as a first timer in the federal system. Already we have a lot in common. Ross tells me he's done time in a few provincial jails. The big guy is very sociable and very talkative. He doesn't seem to be afraid or worried about his time or place. I can't help but wonder what he's like when drunk and angry.

At some point during our conversation, Ross decides to share a few words about some younger looking con seated at the back of the bus. Ross tells me the guy is a rat and that he wants to get up and go smash his nose into his face. Smiling, I encourage him to follow his conscience.

Without hesitation, Ross lumbers to his feet as his black curly locks brush the top of the bus. Shoulders like a football player, I'm certain his blue denim jacket clinging to his massive arms will tear at the seams with any movement. Making his way casually to the back of the bus, the other cons observe him in awe.

Oblivious and determined, Ross walks directly in front of his intended target slouched on his seat, and without warning, crashes his cuffed hands into the unsuspecting con's face. The cuffs cut the man's face as blood spews forth.

The force of the blow causes the con's head to violently snap back. Instinctively, he brings his hands up and tries to protect himself. Ross swings his thick arms and lands a few more hard blows to the man's head and face. The man's head rocks as the blows strike. The screws begin to scream but that doesn't deter Ross. Turning slowly around after his vicious attack, Ross returns to his seat as carelessly and as freely as he got up.

His victim is moved to the caged enclosure farther in the back of the bus. The guy is still squirming and writhing and it is obvious his wounds are causing him serious pain. Ross mumbles a few words when he returns and nothing else is said about the incident.

Driving for several hours on a dark and dreary January evening, we make a few stops along the way before the bus rolls ominously into Kingston. This is the forbidden land of the penitentiaries...

A sullen hush has fallen inside the bus like a dark cloud. The very first stop in Kingston is Millhaven super maximum security; an infamous and notorious facility holding the most feared and dangerous cons of Canada.

Seeing this monstrosity for the first time, I feel anxiety in the pit of my stomach. The horror stories…its very name sends waves of trepidation through my spine. Now I'm face to face with this infamous mechanical monstrosity…

Even Big Ross, clad in his bulging frame, is silenced by the presence of this infamous structure. I've never seen anything like it…I could have never imagined.

Lying silently amid brush and forest like some isolated fortress, the beast is enmeshed by two twenty-foot barbed-wire fences. The place looks menacing…deserted…quiet…damned desolate…

Across the roadway, behind the bushes, some two to three hundred yards away, is the blue azure of Lake Ontario. What a stark contrast. What a grim jest. Is the place escape proof I wonder? Just like Alcatraz was supposed to be?

My cousin Louis is somewhere deep within that sprawling octagon…

Looking out the side window of the goose, a dull gray concrete tower pierces the night sky. The turret looks like a miniature version of a CN tower. It's circular top is a fortified dark mirrored bulletproof plexy glass. The screw inside this thirty-foot turret is undoubtedly fully armed. He opens the first gate leading into the prison through pressing a button.

Driving through the first barrier, I stare at the prison's face and am reminded of prefabricated Universities or Colleges. Grey slabs of concrete are molded together like a huge puzzle. Schools, however, don't have the high barbed-wire fences, gun towers with armed screws and there are usually students milling about with books.

Not a soul to be seen. The distant voices of screws talking to each other tells me this is anything but a post secondary institution.

The sheriffs, back in the bus, bark the name of the con that will be staying at Millhaven. There's only one man whose name is called, and standing at the back of the bus, he makes his way out to the front. Sitting in silence, I begin to ponder how long it will be before I eventually darken the doors of that infamous hellhole. I know the warden back home is serious with his threats, and I know I'll be plagued by provocation wherever I go.

The thought strikes me that if I begin serving my time in a super maximum setting like Millhaven, I could not be transferred anywhere else for screwing up, since Millhaven is the end of the line as far as lock up goes. I could be provoked endlessly in Millhaven and there is no other place to put me. The only place to go from super max, I reason, is a lower security facility.

I figure it is better to start at a maximum level and work my way down as opposed to starting at medium or minimum and going to super max. Moreover, I'm certain I've trouble coming to me from that warden back

home. So why not get to see Millhaven since I'll be coming here sooner or later? Better to come peacefully than after trouble.

My attention is drawn back to the con making his way out of the bus. I can't shake from my mind the sight of his eyes. Dark, and his face appears so gray and deathly pale. His face is sullen, tight…expressionless.

Eyes staring straight ahead, the ominous looking con has an eerie aura. I feel this guy could turn and start bludgeoning us to death without a moment's hesitation. His heavy leg irons, cutting through the tense silence, envelop the bus. The sounds of those chains cut right through me and chill me to the bone.

I decide at that very moment to stand up and make my way to the front of the bus. Without looking back at Ross, I walk toward the front of the bus and make my way outside.

Meeting up with the sheriffs, they panic and ask me what the hell I'm doing outside. They try to put me back forcefully but I resist. I'm telling them to save the government the price of a bus fare and leave me at Millhaven because that's where I'm heading sooner or later. They're incredulous.

After much-heated debate and much negotiation, I agree to return inside the bus. By this time, big Ross has no idea what's going on and I won't tell him either. This is my business and I'll not bother explaining to anyone the vindictive spirit of the warden back home.

Satisfied, I sit down on my hard seat with the sure knowledge I'll be in Millhaven before my five-year sentence expires. It's just a matter of time, and time is what I have on my hands. As far as I'm concerned, I've managed a peek at Millhaven before I return.

The thought of the con who's been dropped off keeps haunting me. The darkened look in his eyes suggests he was in a trance of some kind. There's an aura about him that distinguishes him from the rest of us. So deathly serious and somber. Could it be the look of a killer I wonder? He seemed so distant and aloof to everyone and everything. It's something in his eyes and body language that tells you not to bother him or you'll be killed.

Older by a few years, those black eyes in dark pockets…his face…expressionless…his features…dull gray and void. His eyes are like a void. Cold and unfeeling eyes that register emptiness. Devoid of feeling…

The thought hits me this ominous looking guy has dead eyes…fear grips and seizes me from head to toe…

…Does it not stand to reason? You zombies create one another. People like you have just the right profile to take on jobs like warden. You don't govern the beast however. The beast has transformed you, as it did me and countless others. I've seen the madness and fury in all your eyes. I've witnessed your insane, twisted and demented manners. The walls carry the legacy of violence, mayhem and mutilation. You breathe its insidious aura daily and become a hapless victim of its powerful mist.

The more willing you are to succumb to its surrealistic existence, the more insane you become. The will to care vacates your bosom after a period. You're mildly aware of the wicked

changes within yourself but you can do nothing to arrest its relentless assault on your senses. Soon you abdicate, and become as one.

LOOK AT ME. I'm a reflection of you and the beast. We have all conspired to create this madness. Childhood virtue and innocence is raped and torn asunder under your brutal regime and tyrannical propensities. Sanity vanishes under constant desensitizing tactics. How can man reconcile himself under such barbaric treatments? How can anyone save themselves from one another? We have all become novice managers of this beast that has life of its own. It has overtaken us all.

Kill the bastards…spare not a soul in its infamous bowels…the abomination of desolation is here…consumed with passion, vice, lust and corruption, she exudes her murderous and intoxicating pollutants. I'm going to blow up this damned place. I'll steal a chopper and drop nuclear devices on her rotten belly. Let her splinter and split wide open and reveal her pestilence…Woe…the black soot of desolation and despair ride upon her like headless demons and devour all her corrupt innards. The mad denizens run about seeking blood, murder and mutilation to satisfy their thirst for death. She abhors all virtue and glorifies in her poisonous mist…She exalts in mayhem and mutilation.

Nobody…nobody is exempt from her polluting essence…she usurps everything…all…everyone…swim in her cesspool of misery…chaos and agony…partake of her putrid pestilence…

Chapter 24 / Jungle Range
(Flashback - The Bay - 1982)

What a damned shame. This is super max? The head of security is doing his rounds and I hear the guys calling him to their cell doors. I could imagine what these jerks are saying. The pompous ass loves it when the guys ask to be released from segregation. It gives him a sense of control and power. Strutting around with his fat screw, he assumes an air of confidence. The dumb-ass has the job of assessing our cases and decides, along with the segregation review board, who'll be kept in segregation and who'll be released. We're down here for a wide variety of reasons, and nobody ever knows when they'll be released.

That famous clause in the penitentiary act that says "for the good order of the institution" is very broad and far-reaching. A guy can be down here for several months on that clause. In any case, it really burns me up to see these so-called tough guys sucking up.

Calling him over, he looks mildly surprised. The bald headed lizard figures he's broken my will. He thinks I'm institutionalized. Rubbing his hands together, he turns quickly and walks hurriedly to my cell. Yes, the repulsive reptile thinks he has me. A smirk on his dark face, he'd love to go home believing he's broken my will.

Peering into my cell and licking his thick brown lips, he asks proudly what he can do for me. What can you do for me? Hmm…

Rolling off my hard cot, shoulders hunched and head bowed, I paste a sad and remorseful look on my face. I ask him if…I begin to stammer and blush…

Composing myself, I look intently into his anxious eyes. He looks so happy the idiot. I look down at my old worn running shoes, shuffle my feet, and taking a deep breath, let out a heavy sigh. I got the idiot…

He asks me to say what I have to say with a victorious glare in his eyes…

Pasting a sad face, I go on to ask if…well, if you could possibly SUCK MY DICK? Ha ha ha. I burst out into hearty laughter and grimace in his crimson face.

The big head honcho, his face beet red, turns abruptly and walks away in anger, shame and indignation. Now the entire range begins to hoot and holler. The pompous ass has encountered one who doesn't care. What a blast, that was classic. I've been around these shit houses long enough to know they're nothing. I'll never suckle and I'll never ever ask them bumbling fools for anything. You're my mortal enemy…

(1982)

> …By the time the bus rolls to a stop at the entrance of Collins Bay, the sheriffs are my mortal enemies. They mouthed me off after I was threatened by the warden back home, they witnessed Ross's assault on the stool pigeon in the bus and our personal encounter at Millhaven draws the cleavage line clear. The distinction is clear and can't be denied. It's them and us. We the cons and them the coppers. They with the uniforms and bad attitudes and us with prison garb and our attitudes.
>
> Sitting upright on the hard seats, my eyes scan the tall gray prison walls stretching around its monolithic structure. The walls are massive and unending. Their enormity jut into the overcast horizon as my mind conjures images of Russian circus acrobats forming a human ladder high enough to get over. I doubt they could in reality.
>
> I've heard Collins Bay resembled Disneyland and I'm not deceived on this point. I've seen Disneyland on television and the outside of this prison looks a little like it. However, Disneyland without these oppressing walls.

This place is probably a Mickey Mouse operation anyway. Lots of games I'm sure; head games.

My musing mixes strangely with the anxiety stirring in my gut. In truth, the place is isolated and barren. A chill of loneliness and dread wash through me. Only a few yards away from this monster lies a whole community of thriving souls. Within these walls however, is a community of its own, where people live their lives out. It's not Mount Zion for certain. What could a man do within these walls for ten to twenty years? It's inconceivable.

The gates open wide and we're swallowed up inside…

What a horrific, heart wrenching experience; I'm sure I'm going to vomit. Bile forming in my throat, my guts churn in a tempest of activity.

All semblance of Disneyland ends once inside this awful God forsaken black hole of despair...dark, dirty and dull. I'm at the mercy of my takers and there's no turning back. Grey, colorless, barren and desolate. What's this? My mind swims in confusion when confronted with the reality of my dilemma.

The gates of Hell close up on me like a steel trap door and extinguish all hope…all semblance of humanity…

Surrounded by thirty-foot walls, I'm being driven into a black hole…a dark abyss…a senseless cosmos…unknown territory…

Out of sight and devoid of any rights...this place is going to be home? My stomach heaves in anxiety and terror.

I'm labeled a rebel, and here I am pitted directly against the enemy in their corrupt sphere. The core of my being swells in horror as the bus slowly crawls deeper into this dark chasm of misery and torment.

Pulling my hands apart as hard as I can, I feel the cold hard steel of my cuffs cut hard into my wrists. I don't want to feel the sensation inside my gut anymore. The stirring, it won't cease. My chest…it tightens and…and…and my body becomes rigid.

Clenching my teeth, I swear I can taste blood and chalk form in my mouth. My arms as tight as steel bands, my stomach muscles constrict violently. I can't believe this hellhole.

Coming to a stop, I scan the interior of the bus for the first time since leaving Millhaven and realize that Ross and I are not the only ones left on board. A handful of cons are being escorted off and led into the infamous structure. Now my name is called out.

Petrified, I pull myself off my seat as my chains rattle underfoot. There's no denying the fact I feel like a real hardened criminal with my leg irons dragging on the ground. Hands bound tightly at my waist with cuffs, the restraining belt renders me immobile.

Shuffling slowly, I make my way down the small steel steps and come to a small steel door leading into the jail. Everyone is as quiet as lambs as we're admitted through the front gates.

My mind still reeling in confusion, the screws line us up like cattle and methodically remove our chains. Kneeling on a hard wooded bench, the

shackles are loosened. Another sheriff slips off the cuffs and restraining belt. They're pretty confident we're not going anywhere. We have entered the sphere of their security.

Lead deeper into the concrete jungle, door after steel door opens wide to seal their power and dominion over us. Every hollow clang of steel door deepens and confirms the depth of their grip on me.

Looking around anxiously…nothing but walls and cement surround and envelop me. The polished floors so common of institutions sound hollow underfoot. My footsteps bounce off white washed walls and reverberate to my spine's center.

Tinted bulletproof partitions speak to us as screws seek entry into more corridors and hallways. The labyrinth is so confusing I doubt I could ever retrace my steps if I were ever to hold a hostage or disguise myself as one of these monsters. Too many damned doors and way too much confusion in my mind.

Coming to two large steel barred gates, these lead to a long narrow corridor. It's so small…suffocating…the black soot of despair steals over me like a thief and engulfs me in its dizzying vapor.

The length of the corridor is no more than a hundred yards. Peering down the long narrow hallway, the persistent thought of how a man can live here forever hammers away at me. I just can't believe it. Sadness and sorrow envelop me. Despair and deep disappointment hit me hard. I feel hopeless and powerless. The place is so small.

Shocked and dismayed, I stand motionless peering down the long hallway. The screws begin issuing their hoarse commands. The screws speak to the tinted partition and the gates of hell open-up by command. Amazed, I watch the electronic steel doors grate as the mechanical engine hums silently. That eerie sound sends tingles down the length of my body, as goose bumps pop on my scalp.

Shuddering…everything is so deathly quiet…everything so damned serious...

Stepping cautiously into the corridor, I notice three cons lined up against the bland walls gawking at us. What the hell is their problem? Has anyone ever told them that staring was impolite? They seem so zombie like.

This place…it's a surrealistic existence where bodies roam in nothingness...heading nowhere...whirling to a destiny of ruin and despair…

Walking towards the end of the walkway, I catch sight of Big Claude. I can't believe it. My spirits rise for a moment when I see the big burly Frenchman.

Claude and I had been partners in my hometown. We even tried to crack a safe together. He's walking casually down the hallway towards us while smashing his large fist against the wall. What a guy…

Big Claude, wide hairy chin and dark eyes smiling, immediately starts speaking French and hurling insults and profanities. Stretching out his huge paw, Big Claude indicates in his thick French accent that he's on his way to

an appointment and that he'll come up to see me after. He says I'm on my way to the Jungle range…

Perplexed by what he said about the Jungle range, I watch the big guy lumber away as my mind calls up many memories from back home. Big Claude is as strong as a bull and takes no guff from anybody. He knocked out a policeman in a tavern who tried to meddle in his fight one night. He's a one-punch knock out kind of guy. Just my kind of guy.

We've fought side by side on a few occasions and have always emerged victorious. We'll undoubtedly do so again if required. He's just as big as Big Ross and just as crazy. I'll have to introduce the two big guys soon. I'm by no means a small lad myself as I've put on another thirty pounds since my incarceration. At six foot, one hundred and eighty pounds, I can fight as well as any of them. I figure the three of us can be well protected from any threat.

Still musing about seeing Claude, and infused with a newborn confidence, we arrive at the entrance of another steel gate leading to a long narrow range. This must be where the prisoners sleep. This is the Jungle range Claude referred to.

It's a two-tier set-up. Thirty small cells are cramped together like horse-stalls at the bottom and thirty more cells are set directly atop. The top row boasts a three-foot wide catwalk edged by a three-foot high steel railing.

The green steel barred cells face a bland colored wall with three barred windows running at intervals. The range itself is no wider than twenty feet and consists of a few plastic chairs, a square card table and a television located at the far back corner.

Our section of the range faces east while directly behind us another faces west. The back of our cells is the back of our neighbor's cell. Everything is designed to maximize living space. Thus, the two sections combined consist of one hundred and twenty cells per range.

The range itself is separated by one steel-barred gate at the entrance. This steel gate gains access to the two sections of the range. Another steel gate barrier leads to the hallway to go back out...

The thought hit me that I can't just leave no matter how desperate the need and want…I'm sucked in deep.

The length of the range is a bit longer than the entire width of the cells combined. The cells being no wider than six feet, the range extends as deep as one hundred and ninety feet. Thus, the sum total space of my living and sleeping quarters is two hundred by twenty feet. My personal cell, a mere seven feet long and six feet wide.

How the hell am I going to live in such confining quarters for even a month? This has to be some kind of mistake. Whoever said jail wasn't rough is out of their mind.

Big Ross and I are to be housed in cells adjacent to one another. The escorting screws begin to spin the wheel that will unlock all of the cells

simultaneously. The main wheel resembles a ship's steering wheel. I'm to occupy cell B-17.

The wheel unlocking all of the doors, we lift up a small steel latch and swing open our suffocating dungeons. This is home. What horrible and confining quarters.

My new home for the next several months and perhaps years, consists of a small single bed set against a dull cement wall with steel toilet affixed at the back of my cell and a small porcelain sink set above. A small desk is cramped across my bed and makes walking difficult. The cell is cold and sounds hollow inside. I'm shocked to think I'll spend so long in such damning quarters.

Everything is so small considering the length of my sentence. To serve five years like this will be like living in a cage at the dog pound. Whether I'm permitted to spend time on the range or walk the hallway still hits me as cruel and confining. It's disgusting and unthinkable. This is prison and not to be mistaken for a resort. Suffering will result. Becoming stir crazy a certainty.

To make matters more dreadful, everyone has their televisions blaring as countless stereos compete to be heard in a cacophony of confusion. This is insane. Emerging from my suffocating cavern and closing my door, the screw spins the wheel and locks me out unto the range.

Looking around my new environment, my attention is drawn to several cons seated at the back of the range watching the blaring television. The damned thing echoes throughout the entire length of the range.

Glancing over to the upper tier, I hear some big black fellow yelling for the others to keep their music down. Nobody listens to anybody. I'm sure a fight will break out but nothing yet.

This can't be happening. How could anyone stay like this? Big Claude told me I was going to the jungle range and now I understand what he means. Never in my life have I ever been exposed to such confusion and chaos. Some of the most sordid drinking establishment I've frequented have more sensibilities and order than this jungle range. My senses are traumatized. All eyes dart upon me to deepen my distortion…

…My door opens-up. I'm to make a phone call to either an attorney or family. The legal size sheaf of paper with the dangerous offender application mentioned I could have a representative at my hearing.

Stepping out of my little cell, I make my way to the end of the long narrow corridor. I pause momentarily to peek into Lorne's cell. Lying on his cot, he's all right for now. I nod and wink.

Stopped at the steel barred gate leading to the phones, a screw appears with cuffs. Sliding my hands through the wrought iron steel, the copper slaps the cuffs on expertly. Not too tight this time.

I'll call David Cole because he's very experienced with prison law and tactics. Picking up the phone, I call his office from a long list of telephone numbers in the telephone book.

I've been jerked around long enough here and this is where it stops. I'm going to throw egg in their filthy faces. Eat crow. I'm going to get a good lawyer and we'll put it to you bastards

this time. I heard you've tried this new Bill-C67 on a few cons already and have failed. Davey Boy had something to do with that. Yes, he'll help release me this time. You have provoked me and I've not taken it sitting down. Now you say I'm violent and likely to commit a serious offence when released. Yes I will, but what do you expect?

Chapter 25 / True Colors
(Flashback - The Bay - 1982)

I hang up the phone satisfied David Cole will represent me. My mandatory parole is not something to tamper with. It's mandatory. Looking at the fat copper, I smile and see dead eyes. Should I go back to my cell peacefully? These doorknobs know how hard I can be to wrestle and subdue don't they?

The screw removes my cuffs. I'll show them how to beat the system. I know the ropes. This place is crazy and violent but I know a few tricks of my own. I've been taught very well and

by some of the best warriors. David Cole will get me out of this one. You guys won't win with me. You have no idea who you're dealing with. I can do my time. I have heart and soul and spirit but you're cowards.

Back in my cell, I hear Big Pat playing his opera music. I like Big Pat. He always gives them coppers a fight for their lives. What about that time he ripped his bed out of the floor and broke through many cell walls? That was great. What about that time when he slammed that big fat porker in the face with his cuffs on? He broke his nose and knocked him out cold. Way to go Pat. You don't take any guff from these jerks. Yet, you have to get out and take them out for keeps.

Good ol' Ury is down a few cells and this giant of a specimen is extremely dangerous. He stabbed a guy in the gym area for God knows what reason. I remember when he first came in the Haven. He was timid and shy. What happened to Ury? Standing at six foot six, two hundred and thirty pounds of rock hard muscle, he didn't need a knife. Did it feel good? Always wanted to know what it felt like to stick someone?

Little Wayne…can I call him Wiener also? He wants to pass me his cassette player with religious songs. OK. But how can he listen to this and kill people at the same time? How many years did he do in those special handling units? Four, five years? This place is really something. Pray one minute and kill the next.

All the murderers are down here today. Some are being shipped out to the special handling units; some are waiting for court for various murders inside the jail while others just beat the living daylights out of a few cons. Another dropped the weights on some guy's head because he called him a goof. The guy is almost crippled and will be disfigured for life. This is good because the victim will always think of him when he looks in the mirror. I get it. I know the thinking.

Kenny, Derek and Moe are here because they beat up some of my hometown boys. Chris was kicked so hard in the groin he bled from his ears. He's in the infirmary now. Claude had to check-in because Ernie was going to kill him for what exactly? I guess it's none of my business but I know they showed disrespect by turning the channel on the television set in the common room without asking permission.

I'm going to have to arbitrate this deadly dispute a little later but for now I have to prepare for my hearing. Just don't punk me off. I won't talk. I won't trust. I'll just let you have it. You won't be getting up or even visiting the infirmary if you give me lip…

(1982)

> …Before Big Claude returns from his appointment, I encounter two more guys from my hometown. I'm flabbergasted by their presence. Dave, Bo and I spent many nights drinking, fighting, robbing and partying back home. In fact, Bo is one of the boys who spent much pen time and one who described the experience to me on a few occasions.
>
> Bo was sent here two years before, when ignoring my warning, he used one of my boosters/shoplifters back home for an armed robbery. The kid ratted him out and now Bo remains locked up on a ten-year sentence.
>
> A big barrel chest man, with tattoos on every inch of his large frame, Bo has a thick mane of reddish blond hair and speaks naturally from the corner of his mouth, like the stereotypical con.
>
> With a casual and brief salutation, Bo quickly pulls me aside. Eyes anxious, Bo is excited about something. Speaking quietly from the side of

his mouth, Bo extracts a long steel bar from the back of his pants. Measuring at least a foot, I wonder what the hell all this is about.

Bo goes on to explain there are two men on the other side of the range, two men that have recently been transferred from Millhaven, who wish to see me forthwith. One man's name is John.

Nervousness cramps my stomach…

Shaking my head in disbelief, I begin to suspect it has something to do with the contract issued over the drug rip off. A drug rip off I had nothing to do with.

My mind still racing, Bo says he's unsure what these guys want but goes on to say these could very well kill me. Terror…trepidation seizes...I'm sure I'll crumble and fall…the news has me reeling.

Suddenly, Bo suggests these mysterious cons could very well be hit men hired to fulfil the contract put on me. Now I'm terrified. Bo even knows about the sting. How can this be? Butterflies twisting in my gut turn into jumbo planes crashing in my soul.

Without another word, my big buddy Bo, a guy I fought beside and backed up on many occasions on the street, turns his thick back on me and walks away with Dave scurrying close behind.

My mind registers shock and disdain. What cowardice. The pussies send me to the lion's den and run away like yellow-bellied rats. I'm tempted to swing the steel bar on their empty heads. Had I not helped these idiots on the street? Yes, I had and on more than one occasion. They just abandon me and leave me to my own devices. They're afraid. Here I'm standing in the middle of a range, in a strange and foreign milieu, with a foot long bar stuck in the back of my prison garb, wondering what to do next.

If I have any notion about my valor, it's going to be put to the acid test at this moment.

I begin to wonder who these guys are and how they know I'm here. These two mysterious cons are located on the upper level in the middle of the range next door. A good place to be thrown over as far as I'm concerned. I could be hemmed in on both sides and ambushed on the way up. They know I've arrived somehow and that worries me. How could they know so fast? Maybe they're henchmen for the warden back home, and if that's the case, they'll suffer for their allegiance. That thought fortifies me and infuses me with new courage and gumption.

I'm in this putrid infested inferno for less than an hour and already trouble visits. What a God forsaken shit house.

Searching my back, I feel the security and coldness of the steel bar pressing against my back and make my way to the cells next door. Passing through the steel barred gate separating the two sections of the range, I notice much more movement and many more bodies on this side.

Casting a glance at the top of the landing, I scan the menacing faces. My gut perceives no imminent danger, so I execute the steps leading to the landing above. Arriving on top, I look down the length of the tier and see many more cons hanging about casually.

Keeping my eyes fixed on everyone's hands and feet, I make my way to the middle of the upper tier. I visualize my fight plan in as many cornered positions as my mind can conceive. I could hurl the fellow over the tier if I have too without a moment's hesitation.

About halfway down the catwalk, I see a tall slender con standing near the cell I'm heading for. I scan his body looking for hidden weapons since his physical stature doesn't threaten me. I could fend him off with a solid blow to put him over the tier.

I keep my eye on the slender con and notice he's talking with someone in the cell. He looks back at me expressionless…

He has those cold and dead eyes like that guy sent to Millhaven…

What an ominous feeling does that shoot through my spine. Approaching ever so slowly, nervousness clouding my mind, I'm being cautious as I near the cell.

The tall slender con with the sunken cheekbones steps back a few feet and permits me to look inside the cell. Looking inside, I see a lone figure lying on a cot, and he too has that dreadful look about him. What is it with these guys that effect such a countenance? It's as though they have survived hell but hell has not released its grip on them.

Stepping back onto the tier, trying to keep myself aware of all movement around me, I ask the con if his name is John. The slick looking con man, remaining in a supine position, tells me he's indeed John and straightening himself slightly, asks me politely to step inside his cell.

Blue eyes and thin lips, this guy is way too smooth for me. Even his prison greens are crisp and his shirt immaculate.

I dare not corner myself in such a fashion as they could push me inside, drive a knife through me and toss me over the tier. I may be paranoid, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

Remaining at the entrance of his darkened cell, I ask John to explain what this visit is all about. Looking over at his friend, both remain expressionless. I'm very nervous at this point and am waiting for someone to attack at any moment. Poised and ready to lash out, I once again ask John to explain himself. I'm in a position where I can't be thrown inside his cell. Being thrown over the tier would take a lot of effort.

My ears kept sensitive to movement behind me, I stand without looking these two ominous and mysterious strangers in the eye. Realizing I'm not going to set foot inside his cell, John produces a small crumpled piece of paper from his pant front pocket.

Unfolding it slightly, John indicates it's a letter from my cousin Louis...

I'm incredulous and very suspicious. I've neither seen nor heard from my cousin Louis in over ten years and find it quite impossible to receive news from him in such a fashion after such a long period of time.

My mind reeling in confusion, John attempts to hand me the kite/prison letter but I decline receipt, telling him he could read it if he so desires. I don't want to place myself within striking distance at all. John looks perplexed, and for once I detect some form of expression in this man.

Unfolding the tiny scrap of paper, John begins to read in a low tone of voice.

The letter is brief. My long lost cousin Louis is requesting my aid in the distribution of drugs within the penitentiary. He'll furnish me with quantities of various drugs to be sold in Collins Bay. John finishes reading the letter, and fishing in his upper coat jacket, pulls out the equivalent of ten grams of hashish. Stretching out his arm, he attempts to pass me the package but I decline.

Looking this stranger in the eye, I go on to tell him I've not seen my cousin in a very long time but that's about to change. John looks confused, and placing his bundle of hash back in his pocket, presses me for an explanation. Shaking my head, I thank him for his time and walk away…

…The prison is filled with all kinds of dangerous potentialities few cons understand. They must consider their willingness to kill. What about ability? Do they have the means? They may be able to punch and kick but is it fast and hard enough? Can they shatter a jaw with one shot? Can they break ribs with a single kick? I wonder if they know how to get around a knife attack. What's their tolerance to pain? Can they remain conscious after a severe blow? Do they know how to roll with the force?

They have to be fast; very fast. I've seen take downs and it happens in fractions of seconds. A glimmer of a blade and blood. Some of these guys have zip guns and who says they won't shoot? Who's lurking in the corner Ritchy? Let them shoot because I'll take it in the arm and finish them off. That little cylinder has room for one bullet. They don't always work one hundred percent.

I don't care how many men they've knocked out in the bar outside because I'm sober and tough. I fight for my life also…

…The rope cuts deeply into his wrists as he twists his naked body against the rough tree bark. The stillness of the day brings with it a cool draft from the ocean breeze. Spreading the blueberries over his writhing frame, I wait anxiously for that black bear to come and satisfy his curiosity. His shiny black nose can detect these goodies for miles…a little meat to go along with your fruits…grey masking tape firmly over his filthy mouth, he tries to plead…

Chapter 26 / Major Clean Up
(Flashback - The Bay - 1982)

I can't believe the postal system around this joint. Another brown legal size manila envelop slides quietly under my door. What the hell could it be this time? Hmmm…

Holy shit, it's The National Parole Board again. My hearing is scheduled in two days and they've received notice David Cole will be representing me. This guy is fast.

My heart is racing and my stomach jumping in excitement. Calm yourself Ritchy, calm yourself. This is a miracle. Nothing short of divine intervention. I feel like I just won the lottery. Wait, let me read this again…yap…that's it…the bumbling idiots, they failed to give me six-month notice required by law to gate me.

Far out. This is a beauty of a technicality. This is surely cause for celebration. I'm going to be released for certain now. I can't believe it. Let her rip Ritchy boy.

The hour is nigh at hand and my time is near. What a rush. Screaming at the top of my lungs, I slam my feet in my solid steel door. My heart is pumping and my mind racing like a

Mack truck on black ice. Slamming the door again, I yell in victory. The vapid vermin failed again…right on.

Let them squirm and twist over their failure. I'm coming out in a few days and boy do we have a date with fate.

Maybe this gating application was one big psychological ploy. Maybe they never intended to gate me but rather tried to scare me with it. Maybe they want to keep that piece looming over my head thinking it'll keep me out forever. But I'm not coming back here alive…never…this only fuels my motivations.

It's mental duress and psychological immizeration…nothing but power trips. I would rather die than face an eternity in here. Nothing and nobody can dissuade me from carrying-out my plan…nothing.

You have all personalized my torture and have all taken delight in tormenting and antagonizing me. You have failed to keep yourselves objective and have not treated me fairly. You went beyond the call of duty. Some of you are lucky to be alive...

(1982)

> …Strolling out of the dining area after a greasy bacon and egg breakfast, Big Claude and I separate to perform our cleaning duties with the understanding of meeting each other at coffee break. Without delay, I head over to three block and perform my menial duties for a couple hours until coffee break.
>
> The floor has been swept and mopped, the ashtrays cleaned, the garbage cans emptied and the chairs set neatly in a semi-circle.
>
> Arriving back at the jungle range, I see four to five cleaners and Big Claude sitting at a small card table sipping hot coffee. I'm motioned to come and join them as brief introductions are discharged faithfully by Claude.
>
> The talk is centered on the prison and its people. The guys are talking about some tough and wild con who killed two dogs when the screws tried to subdue him. That story has me thinking and I wonder if I'll ever meet this
>
> madman. I'll ask Claude later about that story but for now I'll remain quiet and listen.
>
> Quiet, I'm content sipping my hot coffee and listening to the cons' joint war stories. The guys are talkative and seem very much at home. I wonder how long they've been inside this shit hole?
>
> Suddenly, the conversation becomes mute and following the direction of their gazes, I see a heavyset screw standing arrogantly at the end of the block. His eyes are riveted on mine. Holding his stare for a few seconds, I look away and wonder if he's one of the warden's flunkies from back home. I'm getting a real bad gut feeling from this ugly looking sot.
>
> My thoughts are interrupted when a loud bellow emanates from the pompous figure. The big goon is barking an order for me to get up and finish my cleaning immediately. His tone is menacing and his posture provocative. Barking like a junk yard dog, the antagonistic autocrat is centering me out.

Embarrassed, I turn to look at Big Claude and the other cleaners. They look perplexed and confused. Some of the cleaners attempt to address the screw but the agent provocateur ignores them. Now the guys look back on me with questions pasted on their faces. I can't explain anything to them at this moment. I'm seized with embarrassment and anger.

The screw is relentless. With added conviction and an extra edge of animosity in his cracking voice, he barks another command for me to get up and finish my cleaning lest I be placed on charge for disobeying a direct order.

Cringing, I slowly get up from my chair and looking into his menacing face, I burn fury into it. He's not discouraged. Instead, he persists with the threat that I'll either listen to him or be put on charge for disobeying a direct order. At this point, I know what he is. There's no mistaking that fact.

Looking down the length of the range, I consider what I can do to salvage the situation. Tension is mounting and the guys are becoming quiet. Things don't look promising. I know I can't let this screw center me out this way. What will the guys think? I'll be bothered by the other cons if I don't save face.

The copper is now saying something to the effect that I'll lose my job and be put back in my cell if I don't listen to him. He's pushing the buttons now. How can I respond sensibly to such demeaning and belittling assertions?

Feeling my anger rise like a thermometer during a heat wave, I'm convinced more than ever this pompous ass is one of the warden's cronies, and that my stay here at Collins Bay will be filled with such scenarios. There's no way I can tolerate this abuse for such a long time. No way.

The jerk now informs me that I've lost my job and must return and stay locked up in my cell. I can't believe his insolence the impudent mutant. He has no fear at all.

Shaking my head, millions of thoughts run through my mind as I walk casually to my cell and swing the cell door open. Sitting heavily on my cot, I contemplate my next move. The heat of anger burning my face and the cloud of confusion veiling my eyes, I hear the screw yelling down the length of the range, telling me to close my door so he could spin the wheel lock into place and lock me inside.

The heat of anger and soot of despair steal over me with one gush. I can't take this shit and won't be put down like this. What a first class idiot. He doesn't know whose buttons he's pushing. Some jerk placed him as a pawn in this game and he's taking delight in his complicity. Or is the bastard knowingly collaborating?

There's only one way to deal with these rat bastards. Shot gun diplomacy it will be. That's it.

Sliding my hand inside my steel metal cabinet, I retrieve the heavy steel bar Bo handed me on my arrival. Yes, I'll show these jokers a thing or two about life today.

Stuffing the bar in the small of my back, I emerge from my cell and look down the length of the block and burn my eyes at the grotesque figure barking at me. The prick is very agitated. What a pathetic game unfolding before my eyes. You want to play, let's play bastard.

Moving forward with a glare burning my face, the screw registers concern as he backs away to make his way into his office. Jogging to the office, I peer through the glass enclosure and see another copper inside. Power in numbers? We'll see about that. I figure the time for reckoning is here and that humility will be their teacher.

Squaring off, I land a powerful kick into the thin wooden door separating my prey from myself. The damned thing crumbles underfoot and flies open to startled faces. My adrenaline pumping through my veins, I fly into their cramped office like a roaring volcano.

The screws are shocked and the instigator, rising from his seat, sits back down quickly when I extract my lethal weapon. The look on their faces is absolute terror. They're unbelieving and petrified.

Picking up the tempo, my mind racing, I'm pumped and pissed. Screaming at the top of my lungs, I must look like a raving lunatic who's completely lost control of his mental faculties. My eyes bugged out, my body rigid as a board, I'm sure I look insane and out of my wits.

They're frozen in fright. Too late, you sniveling scumbags. The steel bar firmly in hand, I bring it down powerfully inches from their faces and smash it onto the desk. The ear shattering crash reverberates loudly inside the small office.

One is so scared he tries to focus his mind on a book he has just picked up and placed on his lap. Idiot. Kicking the book out of his hand, it flies through the air. Swinging the bar inches from his head, I crash it against the glass panels inside the office. Shards of glass explode in all directions. The screws begin to shake. The jelly-kneed jerks are horrified now.

Bantering and mocking the screws, I ask them to repeat the charges. They've become suddenly quiet. The assholes have nothing to say now. I can see they're terrified and wished they had never said a word to me. The fools are motionless. Quiet as mice. Completely caught and helpless. They have become my prisoners.

Glaring menacingly at the original agent provocateur, I tell him to kneel down and give his friend oral sex. When he hesitates, I swing the bar inches from his head and smash another pane of glass. The coppers look at each other with humiliation and fear.

That's what you get when you push me. Get up and show me what you can do. I'll kill you today. I've nothing to live for anymore. I've lost it all. I want to die today and want to take both of you with me...we'll finish this in Hades.

They're petrified and begin begging and imploring me. The rat bastards are paralyzed with terror. I tell them to call Millhaven and have a car pick me up in an hour as I wait in the office with them. Meanwhile we'll have a good time.

> As he reaches to pick up the phone, I crash my steel bar inches from his trembling hand. He recoils in fright and stumbles backward over his seat. I feel like driving my fists into their putrid faces…to slam the bacons in their ugly mouths…

…Jumping in my cell with glee and excitement unsurpassed. My mind reeling and my bosom swelling. Have to party man. Have to release this energy surging through my body.

Incredible. Today is Prisoner's Justice Day and justice has prevailed. Moreover, the screws don't want to give us tea during jug up. Just another deliberate attempt to foment ferment. No problem dickheads. I think this is a great opportunity.

It looks good on some of the guys, but unfortunately, I too, have to pay the stupid price. Why did some of these cons observe the coppers' day of silence over the killing of their fallen comrades during the Archambeault Penitentiary?

I met Willy and Jay in Kent Maximum Security and saw what the screws did to them after the murderous riot. These guys were brutalized and tortured. They stuck a Billy club up one of the guy's asses. Can't the guys see the cleavage line or must I draw them a picture? How could the guys even begin to contemplate letting the coppers commemorate their dead? To even participate in their day of mourning. First class idiocy I say. First class.

The coppers deserve to die. They're brutal and barbaric. They drive the guys to murder. Why else would the guys kill them? For nothing? For fun?

The fact remains that it's them and us and no amount of joint mourning can ever bridge that chasm. Our history is long and vivid. How many men do you think they killed?

To hell with it. I can incite something here. What should I do? The guys look pretty pumped and pissed already. I can feel the tension in the air. It's just ripe for some action. Let me galvanize the masses into serious disruptive action. What can we do while locked up like this? I have experience at this stuff. The parole board may as well get a good fresh look at me…

Yes, a perfect opportunity to go out with a big bang.

Chapter 27 / Millhaven
(Flashback - Millhaven - 1982)

I have to devise disruption. Prisoner's Justice Day is a time to commemorate our dead. Men have been shot on the fences in a mad scramble to escape this senseless and brutal regime. Men have fasted to the point of starvation to draw attention to our plight. Their death improved the barbaric practices in this hellhole. It was a lot more brutal and primitive before.

We have televisions and radios today. We have clean clothes and shower every day if we're in the main compound. We have trailer visits and receive paroles. We have many amenities that were not available to generations past. They have shed their blood for us. They're martyrs.

How many men have committed suicide in here? How many have died and been imprisoned falsely? What about when the death penalty was in operation? How many innocent men were hanged?

We don't have to break rocks as in the past. We don't have to carry wheelbarrows full of gravel from one location to the next. We don't even have to work in here if we don't want to.

The screws don't respect our efforts and plight. They couldn't last a day in these holes and couldn't tolerate the isolation and barbaric mentality we're confronted with daily. I doubt

they care one way or another whether we live or die in here. Everyday is a challenge to stay alive. God knows when someone will stab us in the back. Sure, we messed up and landed in here, but where is just and fair punishment? These idiots go overboard and get personal.

We're the ones who have to live in the trenches. We're the ones who've lost our freedom and forsaken our family and friends. We have a conscious. We have feelings too. Being locked up like an animal for ten years to twenty years would make anyone crazy. It's killed or be killed around here and nobody can reverse or change that mentality. It's horrible.

We have no rights. We're civil dead. We can't take our grievances to court. We're subject to beatings, gassings and long periods of solitary on grounds of simple suspicion. What kind of justice is that? Vigilante justice is what it is. They're crazy.

As long as they get their twenty-five dollars an hour to torture and antagonize us daily, they're happy to feed their family. We owe our pioneers a debt of gratitude. We can remember them with one day of fasting. These very men have died within this very monstrosity and probably in the cell we presently occupy. The walls speak of their pain and suffering. Their blood stains the walls and their screams of terror emanate from the cold hard slabs of concrete surrounding you.

Feel the pulsating rage beating from your concrete slabs. Listen to the heart wrenching pain echoing from generations past. Can you not see the pain and loneliness within your very soul? This palls in comparison to years not too distant.

Jack self-immolated while he was in solitary confinement for two years. Brian's testicles were stapled to the table during a police interrogation. What's happened to all of you? Who are you and what were you like before…before this awful experience?

The men we ourselves have killed. Life has no value. This God forsaken place has turned us all against one another. It has turned us into…into…into what exactly?

I know how to stir the pot and this time I'll create havoc and deathly risk. How dare they not acknowledge our dead? It's their hand that's killed them. For sure, I know what to do.

I'll have everyone block their windows with paper and brace themselves against their walls so as not to let the coppers open the cell doors. Even if they open the food port, they won't be able to see us.

We will disrupt the count and force them to open our doors with gas and Mace and everything else. Bring the goon squad, Billy clubs, tear gas and Mace guns, shields and armour…let's get it on. This is one Prisoner's Justice Day they'll never forget. They want a fight, let's give them a fiery fight. Alright then, another ultimatum. They'll respect and honor our dead, or risk being killed.

Ury the giant has his window covered and door braced. Ury is two hundred and thirty pounds of rock solid muscle. Big Pat is also in line and he's two hundred and fifty pounds and nothing short of a Sherman tank. There are at least ten guys in here that weigh over two hundred and twenty pounds of solid hatred and muscle. These will give the coppers a fair run for their money.

There's no easy way for them to get the count done now. They'll have to pry open the doors one at a time. There are thirty doors in this segregation unit and these house the most dangerous cons in Canada.

I laugh silently and know I'm pissing off the administration. Is this what constitutes a dangerous offender? I'm an agitator and believe in respect. You jerks think you run this joint but think again assholes. You'll have to open these doors somehow and it's going to be a very long night.

How are the screws going to place Ury in the hole? They'll have to wrestle him and all other twenty-nine cons in here. Anyone could be contemplating death at any given moment. The screws will have one hell of a night tonight.

We'll flood this shit house and let her rip throughout the night, the next day and many nights thereafter. We'll cause millions of dollars damage to this infested monstrosity. We'll show them our conviction and heart. Let's demonstrate our power and unity.

I hear the coppers coming into the range and they're asking the con in cell number one to show himself. The kid is silent and is disobeying a direct order. What a go big fella. I peer through the crack of my door and see the battery in their full riot gear. Billy clubs, Mace guns and tear gas in hand, they look exasperated and worried. Dick-heads. What are they going to do when they have to open my door? I have a surprise for you in here.

Ury is smashing his large feet on his door and the sounds are terrifying. I wouldn't want to be the one to calm him down. No way amigo. Big Pat has already knocked out a few of you coppers and he's getting pumped up big time right now. The Mace is like perfume for Big Pat. This is great.

The screws are threatening to toss tear gas in cell number one. Let them blast away with the gas kid. It will burn and hurt but it won't kill you. Make sure you spit and throw shit at them before they take you down. We'll mess up the count again on the next hour. We'll burn these militants right out. They'll plead for the end but we'll never relent.

The kid is strong and has heart and grit. He's not afraid of their stupid little tear gas. Way to go big guy. The coppers manage to open his cell door after much effort and rush in headlong. I hear cursing and the vigorous wrestling match going on. I can't see but I can hear the kid is putting up a valiant effort. It's taking quite a bit of time in there. He must be putting up quite a fight. The kid is swearing and threatening and the guys are getting worked up even more. Good. This is one Prisoner's Justice Day these waterheads will never forget.

The screws emerge from cell number one and are drenched and heaving. One dingbat is cursing under his breath and looks in the direction of my cell. They have overheard me galvanizing the masses and they're getting fed up with me. Eat crow, come on and see what you can do.

The screws are heading for Ury's cell. How are they going to deal with this giant? Here they come Ury. Give it to them big guy. You only have a few years left and you have a definite release date. They can't alter your sentence that much.

Ury will terrorize these goons. The monsters have opened his food port and are going to spray him with Mace. I hope Ury has the presence of mind to keep his clothes on.

What do I hear down there? What the hell is it with Ury? He's not giving them that much of a battle. This is severely disappointing. I thought he'd at least give them a wrestling match for a few minutes. This guy is incredibly strong. I've wrestled with him in the gym and have felt his strength. What the hell is it with Ury?

I'm disillusioned by these so-called tough guys. All he had to do was wrestle them and force them to physically take him to the hole. He's not even putting up a valiant defense. The kid in cell number one did a lot better job at it than he is. The kid is only five-foot nothing to begin with. I'm losing respect for this guy. He's afraid to pick up more time? What the hell is it? They're taking Ury to the hole and he's chained in less than two minutes. It won't be that easy with me…I've done this a few times…

(1982)

…Collins Bay authorities have no reservations concerning my unorthodox transfer request to a higher security institution, although they prefer to keep me in solitary as long as they can. Aware of their desire, I prepare my strategy carefully. I will seek my transfer as soon as possible.

The screws are loath to come near my cell in solitary lest they have urine tossed on them. I figure if I raise enough fuss with the front line workers, the heads of the institution will be moved to expediency on my transfer request. Fires are caused in my cell, as are electrical hazards set about for any screw in proximity. I secure a butter knife and begin sharpening it to a point to scare them. I employ many tactics to avoid an exorbitant delay sitting in the hole.

Notwithstanding my constant turmoil and chaotic behavior, I'm taken to institutional court and handed over fifty days solitary. Leaving kangaroo court, I tell the judge I'll break the screws' spirit before completion of his sentence. It becomes a battle to break the will. I to break theirs, and they to sap mine.

They try to increase the intensity of their punishment by placing me in the Chinese cell but that has little effect upon me. The Chinese cell is an empty cell with a hole in the floor used as a toilet. I merely scream and curse and increase my threats in the Chinese cell. I tell them they'll have to open my door sooner or later and that a price will be levied on the first screw in striking distance. This thought sobers them up a bit and they begin to plead with me to relax as they have no quarrel with me.

That statement infuriates me all the more. Although merely pawns in the bigger game, they represent the arbitrary and oppressive forces governing my existence.

My thinking becomes very distorted at this point. It becomes where hatred and vengeance becomes my primary source to survive my imprisonment. Vengeance to get even with the warden back home for setting me up, and who no doubt feels vindicated by my current disposition, and hatred to stave off the powers seeking to break my will.

Before long, the sheriffs arrive to transfer me to Millhaven. I serve less than five days solitary. I've been victorious in my strategy for transfer. The screws have pleaded with the heads of the institution to get me transferred out. I'm a bad influence to the good order of the institution, they say.

When the sheriffs arrive, I muse that they should have listened to my request when we first arrived at the gates of Millhaven ten days before. The government could have saved the expense of coming to pick me up…

The ride from Collins Bay to Millhaven evokes a yearning in my soul as I look out the car window at the beauty of nature and free people milling about. Here I am shackled and cuffed like some rabid animal while society folk carry on their usual business. It's a beautiful sunny day as I sit in the back of the sheriff's car looking at the trees and the view of Lake Ontario stretch before my eyes, teasing my mind and juxtaposing freedom and confinement. I remain silent for the entire ride and breathe in the beauty and freedom.

I sense that I've forfeited a very precious commodity. How is it I've ended up in such a predicament? A moment of lucidity surfaces and I must somehow manage to quell the incessant longing for freedom. I've over forty long months to serve before I ever see the streets again.

What makes me so different from all other free people? How is it that I'm so wild and different? How is it these people have so much corrupt power?

The car approaches Millhaven…

Millhaven…your turrets and barbed wire electronic fences surround you in your isolation. You were born of violence and breed violence. Your conception and delivery is the seed of your logic while your monstrous treatment is the fruit of your reason.

Your reputation is infamous and leaves its mask of death upon all who dare to darken your callous and putrid bowels.

What effort we put forth in the administration of punishment. If we could only exert one iota of this mad creativity into prevention. Unfortunately, we seek to develop an infrastructure of crazed and militant regimentation aimed at the deprivation of our sensitivities as compassionate human beings.

Your genius for creativity has concocted solitary confinement, segregation and special handling units. In your infinite wisdom, you stratify the level of your barbaric dungeons into the three-tiered maximum, medium and minimum-security. Correctional Services of Canada is appropriately named to mean just that; Corrections serves Canada.

You go on to explain that the cost of delivering your ignorance equal $6O,OOO annually per inmate. Did you already forget the price you're being taxed as a result of the built-in recidivism?

The breeding ground from whose soil no seed could possibly yield good fruit.

This physical structure and its inner workings reflect man's basest self. Who could believe these beasts could rehabilitate? Anyone who dares darken the doors of these infamous institutions become hapless victims of their mad and crazy realm. Its insidious insanity permeates every sinew and envelops silently and surely.

Many people whose life could have been spared have been swallowed up in these vicious mechanical beasts. They've been forced to adopt a mentality that guarantees them neither peace of mind nor one sliver of security. They become subjects of a surrealistic existence where violence and mayhem rule supreme.

Yes…I've heard the stories…

I'll soon darken the infamous doors of that mysterious and notorious beast and experience its wrath and pulsating rage and fury. Not too many hometown boys who've ever been in Millhaven discussed their experience there. They have that dead and cold stare and dead countenance as a witness.

Yes…I've heard of your inculcating and brainwashing abilities…

I'm at the gateway of hell and about to discover what lies behind the menacing and monstrous face of Millhaven…

Sitting quietly in the back seat of the green corrections car, the first steel fence barrier opens under the low hum of an electric motor as the grating of steel cuts to my spine's center. My stomach taut, I begin to question the wisdom of my decision to be transferred.

The screw in the control gun tower opens his tinted bullet proof window from above and looks down contemptuously on the car as we pull between the twin twenty-foot barbed wire fences. The first fence closes behind us before the second opens-up. For a moment, I'm caught in this wiry mesh and know there's no turning back. This damned pit is swallowing me up whole…this sordid place looks so odd…I wonder what lies behind this ominous structure?

The second fence slides open and the car rolls forward a few yards and stops abruptly. The sheriffs hop out and lead me chained and shackled to a small outpost where a thin screw with a long crooked boxer's nose takes the information from my escorts. Everything is so quiet…subdued...

The sheriffs motion me through a steel detector inside the small office before we proceed towards the front lobby of Millhaven. Taking a hard long look at the front of the building, I know it will be many months before I ever see this side of the beast again.

Will I ever see it again? That thought makes me shudder in trepidation.

I'm feeling disconnected and out of sorts…dissociated…where are they taking me? Is my cousin Louis really here?

Inside the prison, I'm led like a sheep through a labyrinth of corridors and countless doors. The beast is built in this fashion to purposely confuse the newcomer…it's a maze…

Something deep inside myself stirs…mixes anxiously the deeper I'm led inside. I can detect and feel an undercurrent of which I can't readily identify. What is it with this putrid place which sends these foreboding feelings running through my veins? I just can't place my finger on it…

Pushed deeper into this entombment, the familiar smell of antiseptics common of hospitals permeates the institution and the floors and walls bear striking similarities. I'm beginning to think I'm walking into a mental institution for the violent criminally insane...

This place is nothing like Collins Bay. There's something fundamentally different with this particular place. What the hell is it?

Suddenly, as if a wave washes through me, I sense and begin to understand why my innards are twisting about like serpents. It has to be the deadly tension. That tension talked about by other cons. They said you could cut it with a knife…it's suffocating and permeating…it sinks into my bosom and clouds my mind and throws its veil of blindness and darkness over my eyes.

My mind is withdrawing from the danger…like it's cowering and turning into itself…collapsing…collapsing from despair…the mind is

fearful…afraid of the unknown…the lurking dangers…the traps…the snares…the hideous atmosphere…

Emerging slightly from its safety pit, my mind reasons that this tension must be produced by the deadly earnestness and utter cruelty of both screws and convicts. It fills the stale air and pastes itself on their faces like masks of fear. Now fear and terror seizes upon me with such force and speed that it envelops me in its shroud and cuts right through my soul… Shuddering…silence and fright remain…

Numbed and disoriented, the sheriffs hand me over to the institutional screws like excessive baggage thrown from their garbage site. They turn their backs to leave but not before saying a few words about what they know about me from Collins Bay. Some paperwork is delivered and I can imagine what nonsense they've inscribed therein. My reputation started in Sudbury and haunted me in Collins Bay. Now that I'm in Millhaven, I can't very well be viewed as a model inmate. I'll survive one way or another…I hope.

Suffocating silence…so distant…detached…the walls are closing in on me…what will happen to me here?

The stern-looking screws at Millhaven are leading me through many more corridors…my stomach cramping with every nook and cranny…where the hell is everyone? The thought crosses my mind that everyone is locked up. There's no free motion and movement around here.

The guys are in their holes…their dungeons…suffering with thought as their only companion…distorted and ugly thoughts…hopelessness and despair as their only company…

Entering the dome area, this is the center and heart of the prison. Its rage and fury being pumped into its tentacles…

The dome is huge, its ceilings towering into nothingness...

The doors are not barred; they're wrought iron steel like those we see on fancy verandas. They have designed the bars to look nice. They don't look very nice…modern torture…physical deception at its apex…

I know…I can feel it already…something has reached into me and is stirring my soul…

Proceeding through the dome, we cross the threshold of countless gates and arrive at a range of cells. The steel barrier opens under electric power and I'm led to a cell.

Everything in this monstrosity operates under electrical power. Nothing is done manually. All control is affected through control towers equipped with countless little buttons. These tinted bulletproof glass enclosures are the brains of the prison.

But who's inside that dark tinted bulletproof glass? I see a dark silhouette but does he have a gun? How does he get in and out of that cubicle? I can't see any doors…he must come through underground tunnels…

Arriving at a cell, the door is a light blue two-inch thick steel plate. My window facing the range is a three by six-inch opening covered with two-inch thick bulletproof glass.

Walking inside my cubicle, the door slides shut with a reverberating echo…

Barren…desolate and cold.

Must try to blot out this hellhole. How long will I be subjected to this…this lock-up? I'm sure to go mad within the confines of this beast. So quiet…so damned earnest…is this the breeder of dead eyes?

Standing in this mortar and brick cavern…I'm alone…a lone soldier…greenhorn and novice onlooker…concrete slabs reminding me of my insanity…I'm nuts…I must be…look at where I am.

Nothing but desolation to reflect the vacant stares I receive from my keepers…I'm an empty vessel travelling on tempestuous seas…no port of return...one way ticket to hell.

My toilet is made of steel and a metal sink is affixed directly above it. It's a one-piece prefab unit. It's dull silver and cold to the touch. The spring bed is small and covered with a two-inch thick striped mattress. At the head of my bed is a window looking out into the prison yard, and beyond the fences, into the woods. The window is fortified with three-inch diameter steel bars covered with plastic slats. Turning the bathroom-faucet looking knob jutting from the wall, I will be able to raise and drop the slats.

The corner of my cell is decorated with a small metal desk and bright orange plastic chair. The color looks odd in here. There's no color in this God forsaken place.

Dull senses consumed in her midst…gray as the prison walls…desensitizing beast. Deprive me yet more, you monstrous wench…swallow me up you bitch, and let me slink through your putrid and slimy entrails…you're a societal abortion…

A dull gray metal screen on the wall is the radio. Probably some form of listening device as well. Even my private mumbling and rumblings will be heard. Men can't even grieve in private since the walls have ears.

Searching…searching…nothing but dull yellow walls stretch in every direction…no end…no unity to this place…it's plain and it's lock-up…where the hell am I? Despair…heart sinking despair…

I may as well be standing in the six-foot metal locker which will be used for my closet. It's a foot and a half wide, empty and gray.

That's it. This is my home. How can I exist in such small quarters for five long years?

Cabin fever is nothing compared to this…if men are driven crazy when in the company of nature in its most wondrous splendor and majesty, how do they become when in the company of nature in its wickedest form?

They must surely spiral into the dark recesses of their baseness…that black domain that thrives and lives in everyone. What in here can keep that place from exploring itself fully?

Where are all the men? It's like a cemetery…has someone died?

Thirty such cells on this hallway/range. Fifteen cells per side and these are separated by a nine foot corridor. I can't see into the opposite cell across the narrow corridor because the cells are slightly staggered. I know they're designed like this to prevent another con from seeing into the other cell across the hall.

Everything is very quiet. I can hear echoed sounds with the occasional clanging of doors but not frequently. There's not much movement. Silence is supreme compared to the jungle range at Collins Bay. But this is way too quiet…

…Ury looked defeated with chains around his thin black ankles…they glittered…the leather restraining belt gave his v-shaped torso the look of an Olympian. I've seen him perform deep squats with four hundred pounds on the bar effortlessly. Preacher curls with one hundred and sixty pounds were done repeatedly. The guy is a leopard and can move like a cougar.

Why didn't he let loose and give them some action? He wouldn't have picked up more time. Maybe the loss of some good time but what's that if you're doing a definite sentence?

Chapter 28
Learning the Ropes

Too damned quiet, no heart and soul. Solidarity among cons is a myth. The chicken shits won't smash and burn this place to the ground because they're afraid of losing their visiting, parole, and transfer privileges. They're worried about not getting their dope supply. As far as I'm concerned, they're a bunch of assholes. I hope to see their cowardly faces on the street. They'll undoubtedly be drunk or numbed on heroine when I smash 'em.

These so called tough guys like to play the big shooters in here, but I know they're just a bunch of yellow-bellied scum who prey on old ladies when out on the street. Jerks, they can make this place their home, but I'll never be made a robot by any institution.

If not for the stool pigeons in this shit house, these big shots would be hurting big time. I see to it nobody gets paroled at my expense. I'll see them on the street and dummy them up once and for all. I wish I could bomb this damned shithouse. I wouldn't lose an hour's sleep after the big bang.

I've broken jaws, cracked ribs, and flattened a few noses here. Punking me off with their tough guy attitudes, they end up bleeding and mangled. I hate them all and enjoy meting out justice on their bodies. The sound and feel of crushing bones against my knuckles feels good. Almost as good as the sight of their battered bodies hurling through the air, blood splattering everywhere. I don't need a shank or a pipe. I can kill 'em with my bare hands. If I could, I'd lash out at every opportunity, but I don't want to risk staying here forever.

Louis was here a long time. I don't want to be here for fifteen years like him . . . he taught me a lot . . .

Flashback--Millhaven, 1982

My cousin Louis whom I had not seen nor heard from in over ten years--with the exception of receiving his kite in Collins Bay--appears at my cell at

Millhaven. He has with him cartons of cigarettes, which I decline because I elect to remain physically fit in my new and dangerous milieu. Louis also offers to have me transferred to his section in the prison compound in order to teach me the ropes. To this I agree and am transferred to his range. We set up an appointment for my indoctrination . . .

Waiting in my cell, I begin to think about Louis. He's five foot ten, one hundred and sixty pounds, and stalks like a tiger. His short dirty blond hair is cut neatly and his clear blue eyes shift nervously over a long thin nose. His thin lips are taut.

I remember hearing about my cousin Louis as a kid. He's the black sheep of the family, they'd say.

I recall the time his parents discovered dynamite beneath their porch. They were afraid Louis was going to blow up the house. The kid was feared and avoided by the family. He was bad news.

He'd disappear for years.

On one of his long awaited returns, Louis hid a suitcase full of guns, disguises, and cash at my sister's house. That was a shocker. The guy had robbed a bank, made a hasty escape, and while police were investigating the robbery, Louis was robbing another bank a few blocks away . . .

He arrives at my cell at the appointed time and is eager to begin my lesson. I'm the greenhorn and have to learn the ropes. Sitting quietly on my bunk, I watch Louis light his cigarette and let the smoke blow out slowly. Looking at me with his shifty eyes, he begins to speak:

"Millhaven is a super-max where Canada's most ruthless live and die. You'll find all kinds of breeds and deviants here, ranging from cold and callous killers to the basest of child molesters, stool pigeons, and rape hounds. Although these undesirables are open season, they remain well buried in the ranks.

It would be better if you did your own time and didn't bother the less favored elements. There'll be enough trouble knocking at your door without having to go looking for it.

Blood thirsting psychos are everywhere. Personality conflicts are resolved at the end of a knife or pipe. Be on your toes and don't underestimate anyone. The mentality here is unlike anything you've ever seen or heard. Don't trust anybody.

It's time to drop 'friend' from your vocabulary and replace it with acquaintance. You make no friends in The Haven.

You could be killed and seriously injured in here. Stabbings and violent assaults are common and happen quickly. It doesn't take very much to walk by someone and drive a shank into his back.

Many takedowns occur during changeovers. This is when all of the prison doors open for four minutes every hour on the hour. This is a time when cons are in movement from one place to another. Traffic is heavy during this period and the predators know how to conceal themselves. They find their blind spots and wait for their target. There are many blind spots around the prison, some of which I'll show you later.

As for routine, it's important for you to change it from time to time. The predators know how to stalk their prey. Change the times of your workouts and the like if you suspect trouble. Without exception, if you feel and think about getting violent with someone, you can be sure they're thinking the same.

When trouble comes, try to resolve the matter without violence if possible. Go prepared and take the initiative, don't allow conflict to fester. It'll turn on you and kill.

If you can't settle the matter this way, and feel like you're backed in a corner, then come out like a tiger. It may warrant playing for keeps.

View this place as a valley where the most diabolical, calculating, and sinister killers live. That being so, view yourself as the most calculating, callous, and cruellest of them all.

Show respect for everyone and be prepared to come out of your corner if ever pushed into one. Strike fast as lightning and hard as a mule. Take 'em down and make sure they stay down. Make sure they won't come back to finish you off later.

You may have to take it to the limit. If using a shank to take someone out, spread shit on the blade. This way, if they don't die from blood loss, they'll die from infection.

It's going to the limit around here, cuz. It means playing for keeps. As such, it's a good idea to wake in the morning, look at yourself in the mirror, and tell yourself today is a good day as any to die . . ."

Pausing, Louis draws a long drag on his cigarette as his eyes look deeply into mine. Although scared and shocked with everything my cousin just revealed, I try to keep myself calm and composed. My worse nightmare could not have revealed what Louis just told me. While Louis is looking at me with his shifty eyes, I feel the numbness of fear cast its veil. I'm incredulous and begin to wonder whether I'll survive in here. It is unlike anything I could have ever imagined or anything I could have seen on the idiot box.

Letting out another long stream of smoke, Louis rubs a hand over his jutted chin and biting his lower lip in concentration, he resumes his monologue . . .

"If queers or queens make approaches, politely refuse. If they make a second pass, take 'em out. By the way, I'm queer as a three-dollar bill. I tell you this because of the nature of your beef.

Drugs and alcohol are everywhere and I urge you to avoid that trip. Ninety percent of all killings revolve around the dope scene. I know of men who have been carved and butchered open because of dope. One con had his ass slit open to get at his dope stash.

Don't accept anything from anyone, because you don't want to put yourself in a position where you'll have to repay the favor. Nothing is free. Cons can manipulate in many ways.

It's in your best interest to avoid cliques. You'll be spending much time on your own--it's much safer that way. Don't encourage conversation with anyone. Be short and polite. Nod your head or say a brief salutation and move along.

Don't promise anyone anything. Don't look into anyone else's cell--that's their only privacy. It's sacred.

Adopt the three-monkey attitude of not seeing, hearing or talking. Don't ask questions and do your own time. Remember that we go to the limit around here.

Stay quiet and mind your own business. You'll step over fallen bodies, but ignore them. There's a sordid tale behind every casualty.

By all means, remain fit and be prepared to fight like a tiger if ever pushed in a corner. But never reveal your capabilities. You don't want anyone to know what you'll do when trouble comes. The unknown is what scares people and it's your best weapon. Also, if these guys know you'll take it to the limit, you'll never survive the attack. It's kill or be killed.

Let me tell you about the screws. They're the enemy. They've been known to issue contracts on us. We have retaliated. I know in my own case when a screw was placed under surveillance for a few days and given a friendly warning. The screw received a detailed letter outlining his activities including the time and place of his bowel movements. That shook him up and he subsequently left us alone.

We don't talk to the man. If we do, it's because we need their services as packing mules. They pack what we can't possibly obtain through regular channels. The cons stuff bundles of dope and cash up their ass. Coke, heroine, you name it, we can get it. That's the regular route. But greater amounts involve the coppers. Pounds of coke, grass, and hash pass through our hands.

The screws will try to get under your skin but ignore them. They'd like to make you shake rough time if they could. Misery loves company and they're miserable bastards. They know you respond when they press the buttons, but perhaps you can ignore them in the future.

The administration also uses the "carrot system". They dangle trailer and regular visits, transfers to lower security prisons, and even paroles in front of your face in return for information and conformity to their rules.

The way to handle that is to forget about the life you had on the street and regard this place as home for the next few years. This will not only eliminate the carrot system but will also help you shake better time. Just remember you're at the end of the line, and as such, not in a place where you'll get early parole.

You, after all, are serving only five years. Most lifers here are serving ten to thirty. So don't play the game. I also suggest you not tell anyone you're a short timer because that's a weakness. The cons may think you would never risk prolonging your stay by defending yourself."

Louis's voice trails off as the doors open, signalling changeover. My mind on the lesson, I know this is a time to be careful. My head is swimming and my entire psyche overwhelmed with all Louis has shared with me. I look Louis in the eye and assure him I both understand and appreciate his words and experience. Looking back at me, he says I've acquired the basics to survive.

The echo of his voice in my mind is drowned out by sounds of straining as my door is almost forced open. The pea brains are putting on a lot of pressure. I wish I could take it to the limit with these goofballs.

They burst through in a frenzy, their hands and bodies everywhere. One copper pulls at my arm and I twist his wrist easily. He grimaces and yelps. Hands grope at my hair and arms wrap around my neck. I throw myself in the air, slam my feet on the concrete wall, and we fall on my hard cot. The scampering slime beneath me receives an elbow in the guts in the process. He exhales loudly. Good.

Turning on my stomach, I stand with two goons hanging on me like bloodsuckers. I feel good. I love this shit. They're finished and can't hold me. Backing away, they point their Mace gun at my face. I throw out my hand and grab hold of the gun. They register shock that I have the damn thing in my hand. Right on. Let's see if they like this orange juice. I squeeze the trigger, but it's on safety. They lunge forward and we wrestle some more. They push me onto my cot and hold my legs. I feel like kicking but know I'll be put on charge for assault. If I resist, though, they can't charge me.

They bring out the cuffs, seize my left arm, and try twisting it. They can't move it. I bring my arm closer to my chest and turn swiftly. Now the Mace gun is trained on my face. Let him shoot, because his friends will get some too. He won't do it.

Chapter 29 / Time in the Big House Down Below
(Flashback - Millhaven - 1982 to 1985)

It took them awhile to get me back to the hole this time and I can only hope the guys in seg rock the foundations of this shithouse for a few days. I know the screws hate me for what I do but they start the ball rolling. They should never provoke a bunch of cons and expect us to go sit in the corner and lick our nuts like dogs. We gotta have heart, lots and lots a heart…right on.

The spirit to fight, to resist, to maintain our basic human rights and to exercise our power of choice have to be practiced daily. Nobody ought to accept oppression, provocation and unjust bullshit without expressing dissatisfaction. The sword is mightier than the pen in here. Shotgun diplomacy all the way. Apathy is the way of the meek and humble. Forget those questionable virtues; we must hit them where it hurts. Money, through damages and work stoppages.

The coppers may win the battles in here but the war is far from over when release comes. Not everybody gets caught for acts of violence outside their corrupt sphere. Combine intelligence with violence and exercise patience and you have a real dangerous predator roaming the streets. I'll be that lethal weapon.

I know I have to send a message out. Have to deliver it forcefully but without raising suspicion on myself. Preparations will be made and the plan carefully executed. Nobody has ever become a serial killer of those involved in the criminal administration of justice yet…not until I'm released unto the streets.

I know their names and know they live here in Kingston and surrounding areas. I'll stalk, track and capture them. There are so many things I can do with freedom, violence, patience and intelligence on my side.

I know the streets in Kingston are well protected and under close surveillance to screw their oppressive tactics. I know police monitor strange persons and that such communities implement community watch groups. The screws have ways to keep a close eye on one another in the event they go missing.

I'd be paranoid also if I spent most of my waking hours hurting people. We're the disadvantaged and the powerless. They prey on the defenseless in here and go on with impunity. They take so much delight provoking and hurting us. Nobody has ever carried out a personal vendetta on them yet.

The coppers show up at my cell door and advise me my parole hearing is scheduled in two hours. They want to know where I'm going when released. I tell them I'm going into hiding

and that they won't find me either until I come knocking on their doors or sneak through their windows late at night. I go on to advise them I'll catch them coming out of the tavern or slip through their back car window and wait for them as they come out of the mall.

Concerned, they turn and look at one another and demand I tell them where I'm going. I don't have to tell them dick. I am who I am and go where I go. I do what I do and see what I see. They won't know of my whereabouts but will hear of my actions. They'll want the end but it won't come.

Angry and threatening now, they say I won't be paroled unless I give them a specific destination. Kingston I tell them. The woods in Kingston. I'll become a squatter in your hunting and recreational fields. We'll see each other on the hiking trails and have a nice talk. You won't recognize me though.

Desperate and exasperated, they say I'm issuing threats. But I know the time for threats is no more. I'm being released and there's nothing anybody can do to arrest that dreadful reality. Unless of course you're prepared to kill me right here and now…come on in and try it I say…come on in.

The idiots walk away with fear written on their ugly faces. They have gone too far and have done so for far too long to reverse the damage. Countless days in this hole and others, fabricating charges, wrongful convictions in the kangaroo courts, incessant provocation, constant antagonism, human violations unparalleled, regular and unceasing head games and absolute bullshit all the time. I'm not prepared to let all this misery go unpunished…

…I'll never forget these putrid rat-infested infernos. Puppet soldiers perpetuating acts of brutality, mayhem, torture and misery…how I wish I could hug my big old tree. Squirm you mothers because the party is just beginning. Come on you fat swine, come on out and let us take a joy ride…

The fat old judge staggers to his bare feet as he wipes the dirt on his wrinkled forehead. Pain and terror pasted on his face, he looks up out of the pit with resignation. You're going to take a ride of which you'll never forget your honor…

Pulled out, I lead him to my old pick up truck with cuffs already secured at the hitch on the back bumper. The metal glitters in the sun as the engine rumbles silently, echoing off the surrounding valleys…

The bastard begins to snivel and grovel as I secure his feminine hands to the cold hard steel cuffs. Naked, he shivers as the thin gray hair on his back blows lightly in the cool wind blowing off the ocean…

Jumping into the driver's seat of my old truck, I step down on the accelerator and hear the engine roar fiercely. The bastard is going for a ride now…

Gravel flying, the truck lunges forward as the judge's carcass brushes against the hard gravel road…

Slamming the brakes, heart beating madly, I dash to the rear of my murderous vehicle. GAADD…I can't believe it's the same stupid asshole…pink flesh dangling…blood oozing everywhere…a trail of human entrails…

The judge is still breathing…the will to kill is surpassed only by the will to survive…too bad. Back in the pit you go dogface…

…I can't wait. Only a few more days and the doors of this infamous beast will unleash the cruelest, most callous and cunning killer this world has ever known. I must let the people of this country become aware of the litany of transgressions permeating this dungeon of doom. The terror troops say we deserve what we get. Well…tit for tat…

(1982 - 1985)

…Millhaven is nothing but a barbaric dungeon for God sakes. Tough, huge and ugly cons roam the cavernous corridors of this monstrosity looking to spill blood at the drop of a hat. Tree trunk arms sway dangerously waiting to be swung viciously on bodies. Steel bars and pointed swords become extensions of their crazed limbs.

Dead eyes stare straight into nothingness and the mind is devoid of any compassion. Bodies piled in the gym, two by fours slam unto craniums as the cons make a hasty retreat in dark corners.

Intimidation and cruel savagery is the means by which they exert control and exercise their self-preservation instincts. A mentality that guarantees the self-effacing of their ilk and fabric.

Tension so thick it can be cut with a knife. The deadly aura hangs like a dark cloud and envelops surely and silently, leaving everyone intoxicated by its murderous mist. It's killed or be killed.

The anxiety produced from deadly confrontations leaves you feeling numb with fury. The smallest slight is resolved at the end of a deadly dual with little fairness.

Friends and prayers one minute, and in a flash of anger, death and crippling injury. I've seen the casualties and the blood spilled on my garb. It's so swift and silent.

Traditional…yes, it's like a tradition. A multigenerational sickening synergistic force sweeping everyone in its wake, leaving them shivering and cold as ice.

Coming in timid and scared, they leave either in a casket, stretcher or are inculcated and brainwashed into killers and murderous madmen.

The school of hard knocks more appropriately named gladiator school, as mother adversity as the primary teacher. This sickness is passed down like a bad flu bug.

Bodies sprawled with heads cracked open. Beheadings and knives stuck repeatedly into unsuspecting victims. Their blood creating pools of red ooze in every corner of this shithouse.

Baseball bats swung viciously atop running victims.

Three-foot long swords plunged into chest cavities as the victim sleeps. The blade driven through the chest and the point stuck in the damn floor.

I've seen these things and have heard their mad screams as their last breath was stolen from them.

Cavities torn open with dull blades to secure drugs from their rectums.

A man hung in the shower and skinned like a Moose. His entrails butchered and left splattered all over the shower area. The man responsible for this butchery gathered the photos from his lawyer and pasted them in his cell like centerfold pictures.

Gangs jump on top of one sole figure and stick, slam and beat him with whatever's in their killer hands.

Making mad dashes into cells, they perpetrate their callous and vicious acts like green berets and navy seals.

How many times did I fend off these madmen? How many times did they try to muscle me? Coerce me? Intimidate me? Provoke me? Antagonize me and step over my boundaries? All the time and they broke the codes they themselves made.

Striding around like King killers, they stick guns into old ladies' faces while on the street. They're cowardly but very lethal.

Hanging around in gangs like a pack of wolves, none dare tackle a man with the might of right head on.

The scene, that dreadful scene dances in my mind's eyes. The bat swung with such force that a piece of the man's forehead chipped and flew off. The victim slumped to the floor, when his savage assailant hovered over him angrily, very carefully placed his hands over the rounded end of the bat, and very powerfully drove the small end through the man's eye right into the brain.

The victim lay sprawled out on the floor as blood gushed from his brain and shot up like a damned fountain to spray the ceiling.

Per chance, this is why I hit like a man condemned to death every time I'm confronted with conflict. The irresolute boy turned psycho by circumstance…there's no second chance…no recourse should I fail in protecting myself fully, ably and to the limit.

Thugs, very earnest and demented thugs seek to establish a name and reputation for viciousness caused by their fears. These create fear in themselves by their very acts…self-defeating.

A vicious cycle of violence perpetuating itself and leading to ruin, despair and mayhem. Colliding into itself, it shatters all. Cold and unfeeling eyes drinking up the blood thirsting propensities of all around them.

The mind…a convoluted organism as twisted as any labyrinth…incapable of finding itself…ruled by instinct. Savage survival suited for the wild kingdom. Darwin had no such notions. Where's the survival of the fittest? Where's better evolution in all of this…?

…The screw returns and slips an envelope under my door. Tearing it open, I see the parole board wants to keep me under intensive supervision once released. They want me to report once a week at the police station and twice a week to my parole officer.

The damned thing goes on to say I must tell them where I'm going, but I know I won't. I have forty-eight hours to report on my destination. I know the stupid law, so go to hell dickheads.

I'm leaving this mutilating madhouse and I hope Ury won't forget to carry on the tradition. He has a short while yet, but his hour is coming. He must do his time on his head and enjoy the trip as best he can. The crickets can keep him company.

Chapter 30 / The Parole Hearing
(Flashback - Mandatory parole - 1985)

The caldron of hot water has come to a boil…talk about heated debates. Picking up my metal pot from my Coleman stovetop by its thin metal handles, I carry it over to the edge of my pit. Peering into its stinking depth, I see my prisoners - haggard, naked, dirty, squirming like worms, shivering, almost comatose - are dying slowly. Lying in supine positions, others shaking, others still lamenting and sniveling. Placing my small shirt beneath its bluish hot surface, I toss the boiling water into my pit.

Wow, unbelievable, the captives, screaming at the top of their lungs, are stiffening like boards in excruciating pain. I walk away with the cacophony of anguish resounding into the night air and pick up my can of gasoline. I really don't give a shit if they live or die anymore. I did what I had to do…I've one last grand finale to perform.

I'm going to take the warden, that one writhing, twisting and contorting in agonizing pain, tear out his intestines and hang him up on a street light on the outskirts of town with his own corrupt innards. The coppers will grant him a big funeral procession that will be attended by many involved in law enforcement and corrections.

I'll rent a helicopter under the guise of pleasure and force the pilot to pick up my ammunition hidden in the bush, and return to the funeral procession being led in the center of town. I'm going to blast away at the pigs, hurl my bombs down at them, fire my heavy duty automatic weapons in their crowd and kill hundreds. There will be panic, pandemonium, terror and anguish as never before…

…A battery of screws appear at my door and advise me the parole board is waiting to see me. I hate these gutless sewer rats and they'll get nothing from me. I go where I'll go and won't tell them anything.

Being led down the long narrow corridor, we pass through many automated gates and barriers opening under command. I can't wait to see my lawyer. I wonder what he looks like. I've never seen him. I heard he was pretty smart and one who knows everything about prison law and parole head games. He'll screw my rights and freedoms…

> …Civil dead, that's what I am in this hellish monstrosity, Civil dead. Hitler's regime had more civil liberties than this sinister stink hole. Caesar and the Romans tolerated the Christians much more under their laws. Romans, when in Rome do as the Romans. Living amidst psychos, I've become a psycho…

…We come to a stop at a wood panel door. Holy mother of Satan, I've not seen this much wood in a long time. Never been in this part of the prison before. Church pew benches line clean white walls. The prison administrators stop and gawk at me. Ignorant and callous ilk. Haven't they ever

seen a con before? They're just as ignorant and classless as the rest of the idiots around here. Village idiots.

WOW, look at that. Dear God. A woman, a damned woman with long blue dress, curvaceous, voluptuous with long, muscular, defined legs and diamond shaped calves hiked-up on thin heels. Long, silky, ashen blond hair and such big beautiful sparkling blue eyes. What a beautiful sight to behold. Yet she looks so odd, so out of place here. What the hell does she do around here? Sentence calculation? What a wench. I bet she likes to play games like all the rest of these dummies.

I've not heard the softness and tenderness of a woman in years. Yes, years. What deprivation. Man's noblest companion. Women round off the edges of our intellectual hardness.

Slumped on a church looking pew, a medium set dark hair gentleman with a cow lick jutting out at the side of a smooth forehead, approaches and introduces himself as my counsel.

This is David Cole? I don't believe him; I want to see some proof of identification. He looks at me with disbelief and shock but I'm serious. I've been taught not to trust anyone. I want proof positive before going into the hearing.

Pulling out his identification from the back pant pocket of his expensive pin stripped suit, he recounts the nature of our brief telephone conversation. He goes on to say he'll do the talking at the hearing. Looking at me curiously, I imagine he's questioning the wisdom of his job. The legal liar makes money releasing nuts onto the safe streets of his own community. Maybe he'll make a good prisoner for my prison. I can even make him the spokesperson for my home video…

…The lawyer irons out the wrinkles in his dirty brown suit with his shaky muddied hand and begins to speak in the microphone of my camcorder. Yes, our correctional institutions do breed violent offenders and prisons frequently exacerbate their condition. This vigilante wants me to…SLAM…the camcorder goes off as I slam my fist in his face. His head rocks back as the blood trickles down his cut eyebrow…composing himself, he begins to read from the letter I give him…

…I follow my lawyer into the brightly-lit room and scan the three figures seated at a long rectangular table. Present are two older men in suits, an elder woman in elegant attire and a filthy screw seated in the corner near the door. I don't like the fact a copper is at my mandatory parole hearing. I've seen enough of these tyrants. I burn my eyes into his for a moment before proceeding to the two chairs facing the three parole board members. They look like clones. Like idiots. I bet they were born with a silver spoon up their asses…ha…screw 'em…an aura of self-importance consumes them…typical delusion of grandeur.

Without fanfare, my lawyer and I sit opposite the three and he begins to speak as everyone listens to his words of wisdom. I'm not at all impressed with his knowledge but am sure I'm being released. Any lingering doubts I may have pertaining to my release are lifted at this very moment. The haughty board members say I have forty-eight hours to report my destination and advise me I'll be placed on intensive supervision. Big deal. I'll take care of my parole officer first thing. There's no way these idiots will force me to report twice a week to a dumb ass parole officer. No way.

The lawyer finished with his brief theatrics, the older gentleman seated in the center with the thick mane of gray hair, directs a question at me as he adjusts his gold horn-rimmed glasses on a fat bulbous nose. He wants to know where I plan to go when released.

I remain silent as a tomb as I stare past his grotesque figure out the large window into the parking lot. Hmm, I could inscribe license plates on a pad when released and run these plate

numbers through. Maybe I could set bombs in their car engines. Screw them and their stupid questions, I'm not at all interested in talking to these bozos.

With a look of curious amazement, he reiterates his stupid question a little louder. This one is met with dead silence too. Even my lawyer thinks I'm going to say something as that look of curiosity and expectancy pasted on his face suggests. I won't say a word to these charlatans. The lawyer gets paid to talk, then talk. I'll not say a word lest I lose it right here and smash your ugly faces.

The tense silence follows for a few moments but is broken when my lawyer tears his eyes away from me nervously and resumes talking anxiously.

His words echoing in the room, I burn my eyes into the panel members' eyes and try to communicate the message they're all dead but just don't realize it. The bitch looks terrified and very worried this ticking time bomb may live next door. I hate these suckers. These are the ones responsible. These are the puppets that wanted to gate me and the bastards who duped me into signing my parole waiver when I first entered the doors of doom…

> …The young blond-haired parole representative appears at the prison and says I must sign my parole papers, waiving my hearing for a few weeks until the board has time to evaluate my status. Signing on the dotted line, I never see the parole board again…

…There'll be no parole for you when in my makeshift prison. I could well imagine you sleep with each other. You're all parties to this torture and to these vicious and deliberate head games. You're all going to pay.

The elder looking lady with the overgrown round glasses, well-combed bun sitting expertly on rotund cheeks, keeps staring into my eyes…deep penetrating glare. What an annoyance. She's so scared and worried…what have they told you retard?

Clearing her throat, she looks at me and asks sternly what my plans for release are. Silence…deafening silence. They're all looking at me and I can feel the tense silence weighing down the air in the room…I'll say sweet dick all.

Looking at one another with alarm, I see concern and fear pasted on their pale faces. The jerk at the back shuffles uncomfortably in his hard wooden chair. The junk yard dog is here for security reasons. Pretty flimsy security if you ask me…what can he do if I decide to start smashing skulls?

The lawyer grabs hold of his brown leather satchel, gets up and I follow him out into the narrow corridor. He says the parole board will have to get the papers ready and I'll be out in a few days. Silence…he awaits some kind of reply but gets nothing but suffocating silence.

The coppers arrive and escort me back down to my hole to await kangaroo court, but I know I have a definite release date set by the board and nobody can touch that baby.

Slammed back in my hole, I feel very good. I'm going to get these bastards and will be remembered for time immemorial. I'll become the first ever serial killer of those involved in the criminal administration of punishment. I'm the chosen one. The vigilante man with a powerful message to deliver to would-be and actual tyrants. Blood and guts will be my means of conveying my message…

> …Blood and guts. Sitting in the prison gym watching the feature film, I see a hunched figure weaving through the chairs at the front. The dark silhouette is tiptoeing through the rows of chairs. Suddenly, a dark object is lifted high above his head and brought down with great speed. CRUNCH…the sound of crushing bone echoes deafly in the large gym. The

guy has to be dead. What did he hit him with? A two by four? The guy's skull has to be crushed, caved in…

…I'm going to be forward and not so cowardly when I get you. You never showed impartiality and fairness to me. That's why I must resort to blasting you all when in my chopper.

They're letting me go. I can't believe it. I survived this torture dungeon. Mike is dead, Dave was stabbed and had his throat cut, Chris was kicked so hard in the bag he bled from his nose and ears. Claude had to go to protective custody, Big Paul was stabbed, Davies was beat up, Robert was passed through with a sword, Nash was crashed atop his head with a baseball bat but I survived. I did it man. I'll die before I ever come back in this torture pit.

Pacing quickly now. Only a few more days. That stoolie in the yard is lucky Billy showed up…the bastards are going to pay and pay dearly.

The little mouthpiece in the cell next to me is quiet. He's very lucky the wing nut. Let him and I go outside alone and see what happens to his little sharpened toothbrush. I'll slam it in his damn ear and tear his nuts off and stuff them in his mouth. Don't punk me off…black…I see black…like a tight band around my head and a dark cloud veiling my eyes…is this psychosis?

I know I've gone crazy. I can't help it man. I may as well do something worthwhile with it. What better cause than to kill the ones who drove me insane?

Chapter 31 / Hades Yawn

It's been three days since my parole hearing. I've been waiting locked up twenty-four hours a day. No yard, no books, no conversation, sitting in this suffocating solitude, twisting, squirming and fighting with myself and staving off the darkness. The tension constricting like a steel band around my temples and wrapping itself like a vice around my pounding head.

The games, the crickets, the mouthpiece and those screws…oh yes, they have it coming to them.

The dark suffocating soot, the excitement clashing and crashing in my soul and leaving me terrified and petrified. I'm horrified. What the hell am I scared of? Maybe I'm frightened of what's become of me. My mind, my whole self is stripped of all semblance of sanity, sobriety and sensibilities. I'm nothing but a vessel carrying hatred, fury and madness. I'm scared of what I'll do. I know I'll kill these coppers.

Now the puppet masters are frightened to release me, but they must. Days crawled into weeks and weeks eked into months and months into endless years. Oh yes, years, so many years. So many wasted days. Prime time twenties thrown into the dark abyss of chaos, misery, anguish and torment. A youthful life tossed in a sea of venom and poison.

How can I turn my eyes inward when I'm already turned inside out? The base and vile creature I've become. The damage is irreversible. I feel unlike myself. What could this mean? What am I, and what have I become, if not some psychotic homicidal maniac?

The walls, these sickening yellow walls leave a legacy of madness, fury and murder. Any vestige of humanity is robbed and swallowed into the concrete pores of this beast. Usurping and sucking me into a deep void. A chasm of absolute madness…

...Madness. You over there, what's your name? You ought to repent and show remorse for your actions, callousness and brutality. The delight you took in harming me, of twisting me, of hurting me beyond repair. Show remorse you senseless zombie.

He slinks about like a damned rat. Yes, I'll get my rats and toss them in the cage. Walking casually to my little metal cage, I see Franky is extremely rabid. Opening up the slot, I throw the cage in my makeshift prison as my prisoners shriek in horror. The rats tumble in pools of urine, excrement and glacial muddied waters. The sewer rats think they're at home…they have invaders in their midst…time for a feeding frenzy…

…The screws come to my hole in the wall. The pricks are letting me go. I'm being set free. Fear grips me. Anxiety twists my guts and my head begins to swim. Panic washes through my body. This can't be…this is unbelievable.

Years of torture, torment and antagonism is to end today. This is too much. To be released from the hole from a super maximum security pen. This doesn't make sense. I'm not ready.

Being led through the long hallway leading to the shops. The two escorting screws are joking easily among themselves. I'm certain the reprobates have wagered I'll be returned to prison within the next three months. They always bet like that. But have they wagered on their own lives? I bet they didn't.

Looking around the dimly lit corridor, flashbacks of my arrival and the years spent travelling down the labyrinth of this stink hole assault my senses. The bastards are a heartbeat away from tasting the fruit of their labor. How many times did I walk down this hellish corridor only to weld pipes together, nail leather to cardboard or clean the filthy floors? I worked in just about every shop this place has to offer. Never lasted more than a month in those stink-holes.

Stopping at one of the many thick metal blue doors, the screw twists his huge key in its tumblers as it creaks open. I've never seen this part of the prison before. This is where I'll collect my personal belongings and where I'll be led out into the safe streets of their very own community. Feeling disoriented…anxious and…and…pumped.

The screw with the neatly trimmed beard and thin moustache attempts to humor me with some stupid joke, when turning, I burn my eyes in his ugly face and tell him I'll be seeing him shortly if he doesn't shut up. Anger surfacing, I want to smash his crooked smile in his twisted face. I hate them. I don't want friendly talk or facades of commonality. I hate their faces and can't stand what they do to people.

The jerk is startled by my violent response and becomes deathly silent. The tension has become thick as fog. I love it. This is familiar. The calm before the storm.

The screws are pulling out dark blue denim jeans and jacket from a small fenced enclosure looking to fit me with my size. The damn clothes have to be ten years outdated. I've put on a few pounds over the years so my clothes are of no use anymore, but these damned things are ugly.

Yanking out a faded brown plastic suitcase, the skinny screw advises me to place my personal belongings in the awful looking bag. Jerk off.

They pass me white shirts, long blue underwear, old woolen winter tube socks and shirts appropriate for the fifties revolution. I'll look like a hippie with these stupid looking clothes on my back.

Has that much time passed? Feels like it but I don't think so. This suitcase is as ugly as anything around here. I should slam them with the corner end.

Stuffing the garments in my suitcase, they slam it shut and we stand staring at one another. Breathing heavy, they seem reluctant to spring the door open that leads outside. What are they waiting for? Open the damned doors and let me out. Ready or not, I am coming out.

Pausing, the skinny copper with the thick glasses and slicked hairdo tells me I'll have to be escorted to the finance building to collect my money. I earned a dollar a day on average while sitting in this shithouse, of which ninety percent was taken away paying for damages I caused.

Opening the door leading to the outside ramp, I encounter two escorts waiting for me in a green sedan. They say I must get in the car, be driven to the finance building and escorted off the prison property. Have to? I don't have to do anything.

I'm not going anywhere with any of you and won't jump in any car with your putrid and filthy ilk. I'll go where I want, when I want and with whomever I want. I'm free, free…wow…screw them and their musts, and orders and stupid charges. Up yours.

The screws are startled and begin to panic. The head of security has advised them not to release me if I refuse to go along with them. What a farce; it's my parole date and you assholes have to let me go. I'm going to Kingston.

They try to intimidate, coerce and cajole me to enter the car but I refuse. They finally agree to let me walk a few feet ahead of the car and say they'll follow me to the finance building located some two hundred yards down the paved road.

The steel gate opens up, and as I approach the crawling vehicle, I break out in a mad dash towards the woods. Faster. I hear voices yelling in the background as the wind blows in my face. Eyes opened wide, my heart beats madly. Looking for my big old tree...where's my big old tree…must hug that big…that big fella.

I faintly hear frantic voices begging me to stop but am captivated by the aroma of fresh pine. The fresh smell of damp grass and soaked leaves fills my nostrils. Autumn is in the air. This is so invigorating, breathtaking…my mind is racing. The body palpitating. What a rush of adrenaline.

I'm in the thicket now and can hear voices from the street begging me, threatening me to come out. What a bunch of idiots. I will not come out for you tyrants. Come and get me if you're man enough you yellow bellied scum. Silence. Silence. Deafening and beautiful silence…I love the serenity and solitude of the bush.

Several moments pass and the voices stop, so I come out under my own steam. Nobody and nothing controls me anymore, not even reason. Dick all. No inhibitions and no control at all. A free for all and everything goes from now on. Free to pillage, murder, loot and rob at random, with no holds barred.

Walking casually under the hot sun, the little green car follows some fifty feet behind. The screws are paranoid already and I've just begun. Turning, I spit at the car and grimace sourly. Your day is coming. The finance building is looming just ahead. A red brick building and a screw inside. This stupid sentry should be robbed, tied and killed.

Walking into the small building, the sentry produces a small piece of paper and requests my signature. He says it's a receipt I must sign in order to secure my money. I'm not signing anything. The sentry says he needs proof that I received my money. What an idiot, I'm not signing anything. Storming out of the building without my money, I make my way toward the highway leading to town.

Chapter 32 / Culture Shock
(Flashback - Biker bash - 1985)

Doors slamming. People screaming blue murder. Tension, hatred and murderous fury. Contorted faces whizzing by into a dark abyss. Strobe lights and fiery explosions. SATAN. Twisted horns and red features come into focus. Eyes as red as flames. Black empty sockets and deep hollowed sounds. It's SATAN himself…SATAN.

The beast. The beast. Shivers cover my spine. Twisted smile and evil mask is adorned. Twirling, falling, flying into the deep crevasse. The heat on my face; the burning inferno; the lost souls condemned and hopeless…whores…murderers and rapists…robbers and the lustful. It's Hades itself. The deep cavern opens wide and the beast is free…

…I awaken with screams of fury and fear. The terror, the terror, it's so real. Heart beating madly in my chest, I try to suppress the anxiety twisting my guts. The crazed cavemen, those rotten screws, they've scarred me for life. I can never adapt out here on the street.

They pronounce my purported character upon the rooftops. They're assassins. Character assassins. They instruct themselves on my character and have the audacity to propagate their narrow beliefs unto society as a whole. Nothing less than self-serving fear mongering. An instrument used to satisfy their sadistic propensities. Incorrigible: So many times I've received this verdict. Manipulative: How cunning I am. Anti-social: Iconoclastic personality that I possess. Sociopath: Devoid of conscience is Richard. Psychopath: The callous killer I've become is truly a terror. Institutionalised: What comfort and security you provide me in your insane asylums. Recidivist: How I relish the thought of my next term of incarceration. Deviant: According to your standards. Unpredictable: Under your incessant provocation.

Labels, stigmas and stereotypes are a systematic approach to ostracise a segment of society you pervert. Stereotyping serves as a vehicle to justify wholesale character assassinations on a type of persons you torment. Stigmatising allows you to persist in your sadistic ways as you create your victims. Experimental animals in laboratories do you create. Yes, label me, hide me away in one of your dungeons and commit your crimes.

I can't sleep if I'm going to be assaulted by such nightmares. My mind is tapped and my body fatigued. I can't go on. I can't fit in out here. Everything is a daze. Everyone is so damned different. I don't have a place among these straight johns but I'm certainly not going back to jail either. I'll die before I go back to jail but not until I take a few coppers with me to see Satan himself.

Vancouver. Why did I ever come to Vancouver? What a big city. Too damn big. The people are downright ignorant sometimes. I almost killed the bus driver yesterday in broad daylight. He's lucky he never swung his weapon when he jumped out of the bus. One good kick in the face and he was down. Everybody was shocked. He should have stopped when I told him to. He just doesn't like guys with long hair and black leather jackets. He's lucky I didn't kick him in the bag and twist his neck.

Being out here, free and partying like a fiend, screws me up sometimes. People, these straight johns, they think different, act different and talk another language. They work their shift, look for parties, drink or just sit around watching stupid movies all night. They have no fuel in their blood, no taste for adventure and no life in their bodies.

I pumped some life in that damned party last week. The drunks wouldn't listen to me. I told them to keep quiet at least twice but they ignored me. I had to empty my gun clip. Nine

shots peppered the house. Bullets pierced the walls as the cowards dove for cover. When the bullets flew, all hell broke loose. They were whimpering. No more bullshit after those deafening explosions. That was a blast. Kind of funny I think. Can't they take a little joke?

I feel kind of bad for what happened a few nights ago but the bitch pissed me off. I realize she had twins sleeping in the next room but she shouldn't have pumped me up. I was tired and needed some sleep. She should have turned the lights off when I asked her to. Now her ceiling light has been shattered by a bullet.

People have no balls out here. They're a bunch of wanna-be tough guys. They have no clue who they're playing with. That big bouncer licked his nuts after encountering my fury. He didn't stand a chance. He had the temerity to ask me why everything had to end in death. Everything ends that way man. Every-damn-thing.

I like my gun. It's very sleek, very powerful and will be used for good purpose. Lawyers, judges, cops and parole authorities. Anyone with a suit and an attitude is a prime target. I had to step out to get this thing. Almost got killed and almost killed a few right there and then...

(1985)

…I'm free except for the sign-ins at the police station once a week. As for my parole officer, he won't be a problem after our little discussion in his office. His face turned beet red and sweat poured down his fat jowls when I told him I would kill him and his family if he ever forced me to report at his office. I went on to tell him that if he so much whispered my name, I would do the rest of my time, and when released, would carry out my threat. The fat sucker almost swallowed his tongue on that score.

So much for parole. Lots of loopholes when someone has the capacity to kill.

In any case, it's a beautiful summer day and the weather just right for a killing. I have to connect with some of the boys and get myself a gun first. I'm going to get the gun for free even if it means having to shoot the dealer punks in the process. I don't care about anything anymore.

Arriving at the tavern, I make a few inquiries and my buddy tells me he has a nine millimeter with a nine shot clip for me if I could do him one small favor in return for the gun. Sounds good to me. What can I do for my old bud?

The guy goes on to tell me the bikers in town are muscling in on his drug territory and he wonders if I could go and have a chat with them? Not a problem as far as I can see. I'll talk to the big bad bikers and get my gun for free. Pretty good exchange. I never liked bikers anyway.

Assuring my connection I would talk to his competition, I tuck the gun in my waistband, fill my pockets with fifty rounds and make my way to the bikers' local watering hole to await their grand entry.

Slugging back the beer with the money my buddy gave me, I'm getting anxious for the showdown to begin. The bar is a small, darkened pit with an elevated stage for the dancers to strut their silicone tits. A pool table is in an adjacent room where a few people are seated quietly drinking jugs of draft.

Alas, here they come…

Patches and colors on their backs, they lumber in five to six in number. They look almost scary for God sakes. They have everyone gawking at

them with awe as I sip the last of my stale draft ale. They must love the attention.

They manage to get their fat beer bellies at a round table to order more fattening booze. I can't believe this sad scene. I amble slowly to my feet, grab a seat at their table and stare straight into their faces. They've no idea who or what I am or what I want. They're insulted and the look in their faces would scare most normal people. Not me; not feeling very normal lately.

Sporting my black leather, my hair tied back in a ponytail, I feel the coolness of the gun in my front waist leather belt. The damned thing is powerful and shoots ten shots before you can say, call 911.

I'm going to see if I'll have to pull it out. Maybe I'll shoot one of them in the leg or something. We'll see. I know I'll shoot them if they mouth me off or refuse to listen. I've not come here to play and pretend to be a tough guy. Playing and looking tough and being nuts are two different entities and these guys are going to perceive that distinction.

That's it. Today is a good day as any to die. Millhaven style…

The bikers are looking at me with disdain and distrust when one of them asks what he could do for me. Rubbing his tattooed hand over a long thin black beard, he's obviously the leader of this pack of wolves.

Staring into his steely blue eyes, I ask him if he feels good today. The guy looks confused, but smiling, says he's doing fine and asks me what I want with a little edge to his voice. His buddies are put off by my boldness but none are saying anything.

Scanning the many faces at the table, I tell them I'm here to deliver a message for a very close friend of mine. Their bodies stiffen with that news as their eyes shift nervously. I have their undivided attention now.

Placing my hand on the butt of my gun, I pull out its handle and show it around the table. Silence. Deafening silence. The bikers look quite worried at this juncture. Like they just saw a ghost or a reflection of their corpse in a casket.

Looking into their anxious faces, I go on to tell them I want to go to hell and wonder who wants to come with me RIGHT FUCKING NOW.

Wow, nobody says a word. They're frozen. The music playing loudly from the Jukebox, I reiterate my question with a little more conviction. I want to know when I'll have company for my trip to hell beginning RIGHT FUCKING NOW.

Terror. The bastards are scared out of their wits. One of the bikers at the far end of the table makes a move to place his hand below the table as I pull my gun out in plain view.

The barrel pointed directly toward the leader, I tell him and all others to keep their hands on the table lest I let my gun rip through their bodies. I want to die and want some company on my way to Hades. I know I have that crazed look in my eyes and I feel how serious and intent I am. I'm not bluffing and want someone to make a move to start this gun fight.

> Eyes clouded with insanity, I tell the group to leave others alone in MY town to carry on their business lest I have to come back and start taking company with me to see Satan.
>
> Heads nod in silent agreement as I slug down one of their beers, stand and stride out of the darkened bar into the night…

…Everybody is afraid of me. Old friends dare not cross me in anyway. I don't understand their cowardice. I thought these guys could rock n' roll but they're yellow and have no guts. Nobody likes to play for keeps out here I guess. I have a definite advantage but this shit is getting boring.

Being out here in Vancouver, in this strange house, with these strange people is too much to handle. Although very nice people, they have no clue what's happening in my head. I love my older sister Lisette for making this connection for me, but these people and I come from two different planets.

I know they're afraid of me when they catch me pacing the living room. I pace like a caged tiger; just like I did in the hole inside the joint. This is too much, way too much. I feel like some alien from outer space among these yuppies. Nice and kind people, but yuppies all the same. We don't jive, can't connect no matter what they say or do. Too smart for their own good.

Chapter 33 / Reality vs. Reverie
(Flashbacks - Jail & street bar incident - 1985)

Freedom. The street. The entire trip is unbearable. My mind can't rest and my body roams aimlessly with anxiety twisting and tension constricting. It's a veritable nightmare as flashbacks and fantasies collide. What's real and what's fantasy I don't know anymore. I'm losing it man. People are going to get killed and it's going to be those rat bastards that drove me insane…

(1985)

> …The steward behind the counter won't give me a bowl. I need a bowl to place my cottage cheese and peach slices. I don't get enough vitamins and protein in here to begin with, and this doorknob thinks he's out of danger separated by this little counter. I don't care about the two screw a few feet away. They can't stop me if I decide to let him have it.
>
> The steward behind the food line is being smug and a first class idiot. Looking into his pompous face, I advise him he had better not get smart mouth lest he get hurt. He ignores me and serves others. The sluggard gives the con behind me a bowl and looks back at me with a smirk. That's it.
>
> Taking my hot plate of stew, I throw it directly into his face. The bastard screams blue murder as the screws get up in a panic. Too late. My fists slam into the side cooler of the milk dispenser leaving dents on its smooth metal surface. Letting go of a solid left sidekick, the milk containers fly to the floor.
>
> The bastard's face is beat red and he's in a lot of pain…

…Too many flashbacks. I just can't get those hellish experiences out of my mind. They messed me up and hurt me for far too long. I'll repay them tenfold. Where's my pen and paper? I have to draft my suicide letter. I'm going to die but many are going to die first.

Dear Mike: The time has come…

Nine whole pages. I never thought I could write so much. Sliding the pages in my brown suitcase received from jail, I slam it shut. I leave a note on top of the suitcase saying the contents are for my brother's eyes only. Very confidential stuff enclosed. Mike will understand me. He has seen what they did to me and has sent me many care packages when I was serving time in segregation. Still in jail, he'll have the letter forwarded to him after my death.

Taking the gun, I feel its heavy blue steel and slick metal clip in my hands. I can fit nine bullets in the clip with an extra in the cylinder. Ten shots. Pulling out my plastic bag, I count the rounds. Fifty rounds of ammunition.

I wish I had two guns and four clips but I won't risk getting anymore. I know how to sneak up on these coppers anyway. When the grand finale comes, I'll blow them all up without warning...

(1985)

> …I hope these jerks at the next table don't get too boisterous with me as they are with the other bar patrons. I'll humble the big bastards. Some type of yuppie football players who strut around like they're prizefighters or something.
>
> Oh…Oh…the big blond haired kid is burning his eyes into mine and I can tell he's severely drunk. His buddies seem to be saying something to him. They turn to stare at me.

What's he saying? Something to the effect that I should get out of here before things get too hot? Placing my beer on the table, I look back with a smile and ask them if they would like to be killed today and see how hot it gets down in Hell.

Getting up from my table, I make my way to theirs as their faces register fear, shock and now utter terror. Too late smart mouth.

The smaller brown-haired fella is telling his friends I'm very serious and that his friend ought to apologize for his statements immediately. How does the kid know I'm so intent and serious?

The blond-haired football player with the wide shoulders looks down at the table and says he had too many drinks and should be getting home if that's all right by me.

Staring into their faces, fury burning my face, I tell them to buy me a beer and make haste. The young fella produces a twenty dollar bill, tosses it on the table, gets up slowly and leaves quickly with his friends…

…The yapping yuppies are all so tough aren't they? They would make good screws the rats. Don't ever rouse my anger you arrogant pompous asses. I'll let you have it and nothing or nobody can stop me once I fly off the handle. I view you all as tyrants and none can stop my heated murderous rage from trampling over your carcass.

I'm going to get those slime-balls just like in my fantasy. The plan is ready. I'll steal my bus, dig my hole and go capture my victims after I kill the first three or four.

Chapter 34 / The Plan
(Flashback - Epiphany from Millhaven - 1983)

I've secured the weapon for my ultimate end. The letter is drafted for my brother, the gun is good and my mind just ripe. The bastards are going to pay and pay dearly. People are going to talk about this for a very long time. I'm the noble vigilante man. I'll be the first serial killer with victims involved in the criminal justice system. Cops, lawyers, judges, crown attorneys, parole and classification officers, screws and that whole ilk will pay for their treachery and brutality.

I can't adapt out here, they messed up my mind way too much. I can't live out here and can't face the prospect of another day in those wicked insane asylums. That's it, it has to end tonight.

Placing the gun in my black leather jacket, the plan is ready. I'm going to walk to the restaurant where the police car is parked every evening. I've been staking this cop out for a few days already. They should change their routine once in awhile; I even know to do that.

I'll approach the cop, tell him I know something of the bank robberies in town and he'll open his door for me. I have the potato secured on the end of my barrel to muffle the murderous explosion.

Walking…walking…the stars shine brightly as deathly fury numbs my mind. The world…the cosmos and I are detached…this is the end…this is the beginning of the end for all these scum bags.

The highway is endless. I've been walking for an hour already. I'm penniless and have no prospects. People are so ignorant and judgmental out here. They have no understanding of culture shock. The women look so odd and are so intimidating. Babies are so small and fragile. The technology is baffling. Gigabyte, megabyte and bite this you arrogant stiffs.

The intellectual pace is fast. Speaking of trips to exotic places in Mazatlan, Acapulco and Jamaica, while I've seen Millhaven and Collins Bay. The hole…the torture…I'll kill the coppers…one at a time and very slow. I don't give a shit about life.

The world and I, we don't have anything in common. Most people think they're so smart and sophisticated. Working as self-employed owners of bars and restaurants while others are studying to become lawyers and cops.

I don't fit in out here. Can't get a decent job. Nobody trusts me. I can't even talk to your kind. The highway is endless. Being broke and destitute, I'm going to starve out here for certain. I'm desperate but know my plan very well.

Welcome to my nightmare you sons-of-a-bitches. It's pay back time. Wait until Mike the Spike, Frank the Bank and Pistol Pete read your missing persons reports and see your ugly faces pasted in every tabloid across the country. The boys inside your infamous mechanical beasts will relish the fact revenge is being exacted. Even if they don't know who the vigilante man is.

There's the cruiser and the asshole is inside. Feeling the cold hard steel of my gun in my black leather jacket, I visualize the scene one last time. The cop is going down and many others will follow after…

> …The police are getting frustrated with me now. Every question is met with my firm but polite request to call my lawyer. You get nothing from a stone. I'll say nothing…
>
> First degree murder. What? I didn't mean to kill this guy. I'm detaching. The world is black…a body roams without a home…

That damned warden thinks he's a big mob boss or something. Spitting in his face. I'll kill you when I come out. This isn't over…

Tremble, shake and beg me to stop bastards. Their faces are horror stricken. You should have never collaborated and carried out personal vendettas. I'm going to smash your empty heads open with this lead pipe...

The body, lying motionless on the gym floor. Blood oozes and creates a pool on the floor. The unmasked con walks me about the yard with red, crazed eyes burning with fury…

The powerful spray from their fire hose slams into my naked carcass and throws me across my empty cell. The snot-bags are snickering. Taunting and humiliating me. They think it's funny. The Mace, it burns layers of skin off my body.

The crickets, they won't stop. The fat diddler, he better shut up…

…I'm going to rip that cop's cold heart right out of his chest in the car. I can see the explosion already. There will be blood all over the windshield as his body slumps.

I've walked ten miles to get here. Ten miles. Standing in this parking lot late at night and hardly a car to be seen. It must be eleven thirty. The cop is going to die. The sucker is going to get it. Tonight is the night the killings begin. The moment of truth and revenge is here…

(1983)

…I'm at the end of my wits as a world of black despair surrounds me. I'm depressed and can't see the use in going on. I want to die but not before taking a few coppers with me.

I secure a knife from one of the shops and am holding it tightly in my hand in my cell waiting for changeover to be called. The plan is simple. I will make my way to central area and begin stabbing the screws located in the dome area. There are at least six screws in the dome area and I figure I can get at least three before I'm gunned down and killed.

Sitting in my cell, I begin to think I'm in Hell. I figure I see hell and taste evil, and if this is what life is all about, I would rather die and end everything right on the spot. I'm very serious and desperate.

Somewhere deep inside myself comes the thought that if Hell and evil exist, there must be something like heaven and goodness. I have never seen evidence of goodness as far as I'm concerned but am at least ready to investigate the possibility of its existence.

Subsequently, I kneel in my cell and pray for the first time in a very long time. I don't believe anything can happen but I'm very desperate and depressed. I need answers and some kind of reassurance before going out to the dome area to kill the screws and ultimately kill myself in the process. My prayer goes something like this:

"Dear God, or whatever there is, if there's anything at all. I understand that You can read minds and must surely know what I plan to do this very hour. I see evidence of Satan and evil but see nothing of Heaven and celestial joy. If You are up there, I ask You to prove it to me. I'm going to kill these no good vermin in a few minutes and You know how serious I am. I hope You understand if You are up there but I've no choice anymore. Amen."

It's like a black quicksand surrounds me. Suddenly my name is called on the public announcement system. How could this be? I'm shocked. What the hell could it be? I've not heard my name over that horrible screeching sounding P.A. system since…I can't remember the last time.

Nervous, I place my lead knife carefully in the soapbox, seal the top shut, scramble quickly to my feet as my cell door slides open.

Walking through the dome, the screws advise me I have a visitor. I can't believe it, I haven't had a visit in well over two years and suspect I'm being set up for an out of province involuntary transfer. I've seen them grab many cons and transfer them out of the province.

Paranoid and disoriented, I walk down the long narrow walkway to the visitor's room, and upon arriving, am told my visit isn't to be held in the regular visiting room. Now I'm certain it's a set up. Every nerve in my body is trickling and I'm waiting for the goons to pounce out at any moment.

Led to a small corridor, my eye catches sight of an elder looking lady with thin gray hair seated on a hard wood bench. What the hell is this? The screw says this is my visitor. I've never seen this lady before. I have no clue who she is and certainly have no idea what she wants. Curious and perplexed, I move forward a little as though she could hurt me. I almost laugh out loud picturing how foolish I must look.

Motioning me to sit down beside her as a mother would her two-year old son, she's so meek and feeble. She has to be at least sixty years old but her blue eyes seem so vibrant, so healthy, so alive and gentle.

Sitting by her side, she looks into my eyes and begins to speak words as gentle and pure as a spring breeze. She's so different. Her tenderness, sweetness and compassion hammers me between the eyes.

Still speaking in her gentle and matter of fact manner, the little old lady reaches out, places her hand on my forearm and states in a perfectly calm voice that I called her. No doubt in her mind and no hint of guesswork in her words. She makes the point blank declaration I called her and that's why she's here to see me.

I thought I knew about terror. I thought I knew about fear and dread. But she said I called her. Fear, terror and dread seize me from head to toe. How could this be? How could she know? What the hell is all this about? No one heard me pray and I told no one about my plan to kill the coppers. Is this the answer to my prayers? How can this be? My mind racing, body shaking, I can't say anything in return.

My jaw slack and head reeling, I listen in awe as the little old lady talks about the harsh prison conditions in Mexico and how far better off we are in Canada. She goes on to say her cancer is a form of imprisonment of which there's no escape or hope.

I'm blown away. I can't believe this marvel. This…this miracle?

Reaching over, I feel her upper arm to make sure I'm not dreaming and that she's not some kind of hallucination. She feels soft and warm. Holy shit. This is real.

She said I called her. How could this be? She's certain if it. Not a doubt in her mind. This is not possible but here she is and this is what she says. It's true. I did call for help and here it is right before my very eyes and ears.

Unable to handle the little old lady, I excuse myself from her presence, walk hurriedly to my cell, throw the knife out my window and tremble for hours without respite. The murderous plan is abandoned…

…The thought of what I'm about to do strikes me. I'm going to kill that prick and there's no denying that fact. Without willing it, the incident at Millhaven resurfaces with great power and force. It washes over me and sweeps right through me like a tidal wave.

The thought of the little old lady has blurred but the sight of her blue crystal clear eyes left an impression. Her words threw me for a loop. Maybe I ought to pray again and make sure I'm not making the biggest mistake in my life. I could say a few words and see what happens. I doubt anything will happen, and in that case, I can say I tried and kill with a clear conscience. All right here's a prayer:

"Dear God or whatever it is, if there is anything at all. You know what I'm about to do so You had better stop me if You exist. If You don't do anything, I'll be convinced of Your non-existence. You had better not deliver a bolt of lightning in the sky or anything so diffuse either. I'll need proof positive of Your existence. Thunder and lightning is all too common and I won't believe this to be You. I don't know what You can do but You know how serious I am. I leave You with this. Amen".

My prayer thus said, I'm prepared to kill the cop and go on to capture, torture and kill all the other rat-infested dogfaces.

I will have to wait a few moments and let that rotund fellow approaching from the entrance of the large strip mall make his way out and clear away from here. I wonder what the hell he's doing out here at such a late hour?

He's coming directly for me the idiot. Get the hell away because I don't want to kill innocent people if I don't have to. I've been trained not to leave witnesses. I'll have to play it cool and wait. I wish he'd just turn and walk in the other direction the idiot. He's approaching and is saying something. The big fella has this stupid smile on his rosy features. He's muttering something. What the hell does he want and what is he doing out so late? Probably a queer. I've had enough of queers and if he is one of those, he'll die with the cop tonight.

A few feet away from me he stops suddenly, smiles and looks me dead straight in the eye, with big blue eyes and rosy cheeks and says without hesitation or doubt that I called him. He's certain of it and won't be dissuaded. His eyes are bright, clear, he is gentle, calm, convinced, . . .unreal . . .

Fear, Dread, Trepidation, shock, disbelief and terror seize. NOOOO…this can't be. My guts twisting in anxiety, my mind racing, my body goes limp and my energy is sapped. I'm hearing and seeing things. I have to be hallucinating. This can't be happening . . . again. Flashbacks of the little old lady in Millhaven wrap around my brain. She said the same damn thing. How could they know? This is not fucking possible.

Chapter 35 / Armed and Dangerous

Police cars everywhere. The hollow sounds of loading shotgun clips echoing in the playground and penetrating my soul's center. The sun's beating down on my face and police are concealed behind their car doors with guns trained on me from every direction. A voice bellows from a hand held microphone as my hand reaches for my gun. Looking to my left, I notice a nervous policeman, standing twenty feet away, with a trembling hand aiming his gun for my chest. He's telling me to drop to my knees.

I'm surrounded by the swat team. They're going to kill me. This is the end. This is what I want. I don't care anymore. Reaching inside my black leather jacket, I feel the cool steel of my fully loaded semi-automatic nine millimeter hand gun. 380 grams of explosive power in every round with pockets bulging with fifty rounds of ammunition. The safety is off and I'm ready to draw and shoot it out. I can roll to the ground and blow that little sucker away.

The voice from the microphone is telling me to drop to the ground and raise my hands above my head. Pulling out the ridged butt of my gun, I look straight down the barrel of the cop's 38 revolver. His hands are trembling and his eyes seem so anxious and scared. Is he going to shoot? He's only a few feet away and I can almost smell the black alloy's killing power. Can the bullet throw me back?

Calm, peaceful. I feel at peace with the universe. This is the end. I can't go on living. It would be better if I could take a few of them with me but I'll never get any of them now. I should have killed them when I had the chance.

Was it coincidence Ritchy? Something or somebody stopped you. That little old lady and that rotund fellow may have been...no it can't be. Even if they were angels, He'll forgive me. Suicide is not the same as murder is it?

Nobody's moving and the guns remain on me. One more move and I'm gone. Does hell exist? They said I called them. Both said the same thing. Shivers shoot through my spine. I'm terrified. What if hell exists? Eternal suffering will result.

The cops are motionless. Why aren't they shooting? My gun half exposed, the tremulous trigger man is cocking his hammer. He'll blast me between the eyes but I can tell he doesn't want to. What's his problem? He's a damn kid. He's terrified. He doesn't want to find out what killing another does to your mind. Maybe the battery atop the crest will get me first.

At least thirty guns resting on rooftops with car doors flung open. The ends of weapons pointing through car windows all drawn and pointing at me. I'll be peppered and riddled. I won't feel a thing. I feel like I have a hole in my soul. The henchmen from Hades have damaged me beyond repair. I'm too afraid to live out here, don't want to go back inside and I'm too afraid to die now.

I can't relate to these doorknobs and straight johns. Can't get a damned job…no money…no future…no hope. I know I've lost the capacity to love, to care and to be at peace. What's the sense in going on? Nothing has any meaning…everything is a game with people playing rote roles. I exist in an empty and senseless cosmos. Travelling through this temporary parking lot with hatred and chaos as companions. Murderous rage as my only constant. I can't go on like this.

What's the meaning of life? It's overvalued…it's a life sentence…something to bear…a hellish dimension imposed without my consent…I abdicate…I don't want this gift…it's a plague. What a grim jest. Smiling faces are a veneer for hypocrisy. Self-importance and the

pursuit of wealth control these lustful beasts…corrupt prevaricators…selfish ilk…self-centered and greedy.

I've seen it all…I've tasted from the bread of misery and drank from the cup of hatred. I'm imbued by its poisonous aura. I've been catapulted into the realm of insanity and can't reverse the damage. My eyes are clear and my mind knows…I'm very lucid and right in my convictions.

The bastards have rendered me culturally illiterate…I don't fit in anywhere…I'm lost…an iconoclast ostracized by tyrants…they perpetuate their beliefs unto society as a whole…unforgiving bastards…the whole lot of them. They impose value judgments on my character the damned gossips…I'm much more aware than any of you idiots.

They'll kill me. I've placed myself in a position where they must kill me since I've not the courage to do it myself. I'll absolve myself from the plague of suicide. I robbed the motel without a disguise, so they know I'm the one. I've let them find me for our final act. I would rather die than go back to jail. They'll finish me off…this is what I want…I cornered myself out of cowardice…unable to kill myself, the cops will do it for me.

I robbed the motel, walked to the woods and contemplated a long time trying to kill myself, but cursed myself as a coward because I could not see it through. The barrel of the gun in the roof of my mouth, I could not pull the trigger. Now I've come out in the open, in this playground, to shoot it out. To end it all. They'll kill me…they must…I can't do it myself

It's a sin and I'm also a coward. But this is how it must end…this is my back up plan…I knew I might chicken out. But now the end is near and here…it's so near. I hope the little old lady at the motel is not traumatized by the sight of my gun. I wasn't going to kill her. I hope she understands. She may understand if they read her the suicide letter I left for my brother in the suitcase. She's only a tool…a pawn in this game…this game to kill myself.

They're not shooting. What the hell. I must muster the courage to end it this time. I couldn't kill myself in the woods immediately after the robbery but this is my impetus. This is my back up plan. I knew I might chicken out on my own, but this time they'll do the job for me. The coppers can at least do that for me. They've killed me inside, now they can complete the job…have to go through with it.

Too bad I can't take a few of them with me…that would've been ideal. I can't pull it off…I want to pull my gun out and start slamming bullets everywhere but the cops have the drop on me. They'd fill me with lead before I could pull the gun out of my jacket.

Cursing myself as a coward, I kneel to the cold ground and raise my hands above my head. Despair, loneliness, isolation and exasperation wash over and through me. No guts…no balls. I'm going back to jail…maybe I'll die this time. I have that little mouthpiece to take care of…I don't give a shit anymore and that's for certain.

The shaky cop approaches and secures the cuffs behind my back. My gun clip is emptied and I'm led into the police car as we speed toward town. I'm defeated…it's so dark and dreary…what's the use…can't live and can't die…I'm caught…caught in this…this…dead zone…in limbo…in a deep void…purgatory is indeed on earth…too afraid to live and too afraid to die…who ever thought it could be like this?

The bright sun in my eyes…but it's so dark inside…why didn't they shoot and kill me? They could have finished me off. I was armed and ready but got scared at the end. I'm going back to the pen…back to my hole…for how long this time? I've only been out a few weeks. I'm looking at another five years.

Epilogue

I should be dead and probably deserve to be 6 feet under. I was mean, dangerous, thoughtless, selfish, violent and self-centered to the max. I had the social skills of a bull and the emotional intelligence of a psychopath. I just did not care for anything except myself. I did not care who I hurt. It was all about me and no-one else. I justified every stupid thing I did. I was a real fucking dangerous and violent asshole to be honest.

I am extremely sorry for all the harm and pain I caused. I wish I had never lied, cheated, hit, stole, and certainly wish I had never killed anyone. I often think about that manslaughter conviction and understand that no matter how many lives I try to save out here, I will always be in debt, stigmatized and accursed by that deadly and fatal reckless accident. I know the victim suffered a short life and was denied the opportunity to live fully, freely and happily. It's like Clint said in the Unforgiven - *killing someone takes everything a man has and anything he will ever have*. This fact weighs heavily and these words have depth and weight. The fatal finality of this death I carry with me all the time. I am truly sorry. I wish it had never happened.

You can't make amends for something like that. You can partially make restitution for theft by repaying the money and serving community service and changing my ways, but even changing my ways and helping others does not constitute amends because there is no reparation available for lost life. I will carry this justified guilt with me forever but I know carrying the loss is a greater burden. This isn't about me anymore. There are living breathing victims out there who have lost a loved one. I don't even dare ask their forgiveness. I mean, could I forgive someone who killed my loved one? I don't think so, but I heard of people who are more forgiving and are better people than I am who have. You'd think I should be able to forgive given that I understand how these fatal accidents occur. These are preventable accidents but a lot of effort has to go into prevention before they can be prevented.

I suppose it could have been avoided if I could have chosen no to hit anyone but instead I chose to drink, drug it up and fight. I am fully responsible and guilty. I can honestly say I had no intention to kill, but so what – I did. I was stupid, reckless, thoughtless and violent. These are high risk behaviors that I should have known presented serious threat. But of course, I chose not to think of that. I wanted to drink and have a good time and did not care about consequences. I know now that good intentions or no intentions leave room for fatal error. No planning is like bad planning – I could expect the same result.

To be clear, I deserved every single day I did in jail. I probably should have been sent to jail for life like many others. But lawyers and the Criminal Code of Canada dictated I receive a 5 year sentence for a manslaughter conviction because of the alcohol involved which precluded premeditation and resulted in recklessness, the provocation that triggered the 2 punches, and the lack of intent to seriously harm or kill. Yes, it was 2 punches that killed, none that would kill anyone under any under circumstance except for that the victim was a bit older, 54, was very intoxicated, and he fell unconscious on his back and died from fluid build-up in his lungs. The coroner ruled the individual died from pulmonary edema. If the victim had not been hit, he would have survived, obviously. If he had fallen to his side or if I had rolled him on his side into the recovery position, he would have survived the knock out.

I had knocked out at least 50 or 60 others during the last 2 years in similar fashion with no long term baleful effects, but this one died. The others had all eventually woken up, stood and brushed themselves off while the others went to get their nose straightened or jaws wired at the hospital. But they lived.

It's very true that I suffer and should rightfully experience survivor's guilt and I have felt this way ever since I sobered up in jail shortly after the manslaughter. I came to my senses about this murder when I was in jail a few months into my sentence. I stopped taking the sleeping medication the prison doctor gave me and was overwhelmed with a deep sense of remorse, guilt, sadness and fear. I wept bitterly into my pillow and prayed for forgiveness. I was completely overcome by the fatal event. Its meaning struck me to the core with such force and power that it rendered me numb and blank. I went into shock and stayed like that for a long long time.

I felt guilty because I was. I could not escape the fact I committed this heinous crime. There was no way for me to shield myself from myself. This crime could not be justified. This one stood out and stood alone from the rest and for good reason. I had crossed the line, a line I never knew really existed. A line I never intended to cross under any circumstance. Yet here I was on the other side of that invisible line, bereft of excuses and lying naked in my guilt.

I was alone in jail because prison officials kept me in solitary. In spite of all the conflicts I had with the guards and warden, something |I secretly wanted and deliberately provoked, I held council with myself in the hole, convincing myself I had to suffer for this horrible crime. More time in the hole, serving my entire sentence and suffering would be my lot, and so I kept telling and repeating to myself. Atonement could only come with pain, suffering, deprivation and hardship and who else to deliver but corrections and jail personnel? Surely they had what it took to make my life pure hell? If not, maybe I could help them mete out their worse by giving them something to think about?

So like King Leonidas of Sparta I provoked the wolf and it did not disappoint. It descended upon me with all the vigor, conviction and might the entire prison industrial complex could muster. They gassed me, cuffed and shackled me, stripped me naked, blasted me with the fire hose, denied me basic human rights, kept me locked in my 5 by nine for months, deprived me of sleep, sneered, laughed and scoffed at me, kept me in maximum security prison with dangerous and demented psychopaths, sent other cons to provoke and hurt me, fabricated charges to keep me in the hole, and ad nauseam.

Unbeknownst to them, I relished the punishment because I felt I could atone in part through this vicious type of human corporal punishment. Unfortunately this had unexpected ramifications and consequences. While it is true I felt some measure of atonement, I simultaneously built up burning resentment and anger and a strong desire to retaliate and get even. This was an unintended by product of the institutional violence I received, part of it I asked for and desired and some of which I felt I did not deserve or ask for. I thought they had crossed the line. So it was the latter that did a number on me. Got to watch what you pray and ask for right?

This leads me to discuss the nature of crime I my case.

Crime, as you know, does not happen in a vacuum. In my case, I believe I was a socially constructed criminal and not a strict pathological case. Pathological cases are those where the individual lacks empathy, is genetically and chemically different and has biological markers and or psychological disorders. Social constructionist types are those who are influenced by social factors into crime. I believed |I belong to this group.

I had a shitty childhood, a very violent older brother and was born, bred and trained in a crucible of alcohol, drugs, violence and criminality. I'll not get into the broad and controversial academia of social constructionism except to say that some kids are at higher risk to become addicted and convicted.

Having read my memoir, you can see how such baleful influences affect a young formative mind. Sensitive kids are most vulnerable to their baleful effects and I believe I was a sensitive and smart kid. I was actually a good kid for a bit.

It's worth repeating that I regret the harm I caused on all and every level. I honestly shake my head in disbelief and look upon the wild and crazy kid I was with a mix of contempt and disgust. I would not want to meet my former self today. I could not trust that person and would recognize the need to stay clear and lock my possessions. Unless of course it was in a counseling capacity. That would change everything. But more on that later. Let me get back to the 2 divine interventions because I know you will have questions, as I did and still do.

I often wonder if you need to get a taste of hell on earth before you can get a taste of heaven like I did in those two brief, dangerous and dark moments. I had not told anyone of my murderous intentions to kill guards in Millhaven or shared a word to anyone about my intent to kill cops on the street and yet on both occasions when I was minutes away from actually carrying out my insane, cowardly and sick plan, people showed up and both were dead serious and convinced I had called them. Both said the same thing. They said I called them. There was no hesitation, doubt or question about it. They were dead certain I called them. How can this happen?

This is a true story and there are records at the institution of this little old lady visiting me. She was real and I was sober. I had never met and did not know this lady. I had no contact with the outside world at all and did not talk to the prison officials ever, except when I told them where to go. I did not drink or do drugs in jail. I remember I had the knife, the murderous and insane intent and had just finished my prayer when my door slid open and the guard announced on the PA that I had a visit. This is a true account - - no BS. The visit was otherworldly, defied logic, did not adequately meet the definition of coincidence and was beyond the bounds of a planned intervention.

I prayed and she showed up. That is the nexus. I prayed for the first time in years and she showed up at that exact moment in time and space. Nobody knew of my intention. She did not know me. How can this happen? She said I called her. This is true. I was floored.

Same deal with the individual who intervened on the street. I found out later that night that he was praying at home earlier that evening and was prompted to go where I was. He said I called him. He said the exact same the little old lady said. This is mind boggling.

I often think about these 2 striking events in my life. They are the bookends of my recovery and sobriety and my new way of life. There are many lesser books between these two but none could stand with the divine interventions.

Perhaps divine interventions of the type I just described and experienced are reserved for the most desperate nut jobs like I was at that time. I was in a murderous, suicidal depressive psychosis that no amount of counseling, self-help or treatment could arrest or deflect. I told nobody of my insanity and murderous and suicidal impulses. I lived alone with those demons and that torment. In spite of this chronic madness, I had the presence of mind to pray to whatever God I thought might exist. I did so to be on the right side of history so to speak. I did not want to kill a bunch of folks only to spend an eternity in hell and be denied a possibly of entering the pearly gates. I was that far gone and that naïve and that desperate and simple at the time. It was a simple question I was asking and I needed and wanted answer very desperately.

If nobody had answered, I would have killed these folks. If that little old lady had not shown up, the guards in the control dome would have been killed and seriously injured. If that preacher boy had no shown up in that Burnaby shopping mall parking lot, that cop in the cruiser would have been shot. I'm not proud to say that, in fact I am ashamed I was that sick.

But in both cases, I asked God to prove he existed and He did it and did it convincingly. I prayed earnestly only 2 times in my life and both times I received a divine intervention. This goes beyond coincidence. I don't know anyone else who has experienced such dramatic encounters. I and my potential victims were spared and blessed.

Perhaps this is the difference between those who kill and those who don't? My brother killed several people and he was an atheist. I wonder if God would have answered his prayer if he had only prayed? Is a simply yet sincere prayer all that is required? It was in my case.

I sometimes think God intervened to save those good folks. He didn't do it to just help me, but to help the cop and guards. But I was the one who prayed. I was the desperate and sick patient on his knees in his cell and the deranged man standing armed in the parking lot at night with a loaded nine millimeter pistol. This pistol was later recovered by police during my armed robbery.

Gratitude does not begin to express how I feel about my second and third chance in life. Why was I answered so convincingly and powerfully while others die and languish in misery, pain and institutions? Why was my mind cleansed and my character changed while others remain incorrigible and criminal?

I honestly do not want to steal, lie, cheat, deceive or hurt anyone on any level anymore. I was scared straight at first by those 2 interventions but now I am like this because I enjoy being a good guy you can count on and trust.

My character, values, opinions, beliefs, habits, addiction and criminal and corrupt mind was not cleansed overnight because it took years of hard work to defeat the self-defeating patterns and self-destructive thought structures.

I will address these efforts in another book, but suffice to say, I remain forever grateful and vigilant.

In conclusion, I am no better or worse than any of you. I view myself as a regular guy who works a regular job and who just does his best to treat people well, respectfully and politely.